

# **What are the elements that make an effective and popular cocktail bar?**

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<p>This thesis is a research-oriented study with the aim to find out the most important elements of an effective and popular cocktail bar. In addition to finding key elements, four cocktail bars in Helsinki were chosen and compared with each other. These cocktail bars are Chihuahua Julep, (The One Bar) Flavourium, Goldfish and Trillby &amp; Chadwick. The original plan was to visit the bars in person and interview their customers face to face. However, due to Coronavirus (Covid-19) all the bars in Helsinki were closed and visitation was no longer possible. The comparison of the four bars was made based on their online customer service their social media appearance.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the research focuses on the theory and history of cocktails. First, cocktail as a beverage and how it became to existence is explained. Different cocktail making tools and ways of preparing cocktails are introduced. After that, I will explain the rise of cocktail bars from the beginning to this day and introduce three unique cocktail bars from different parts of the world. These cocktail bars were chosen to show the reader examples of different cocktail bar concepts. Lastly, I will explain about the necessary steps for starting your own cocktail bar, as well as, talking about the different ways of marketing it on social media.</p> <p>The method of this thesis is quantitative. In order to find out answer to the research questions a survey was created and shared in multiple Facebook groups. The survey included questions about participants' likes or dislikes towards cocktail bars and their products, as well as, different reasons to revisiting the same bar again. Few questions about my four chosen cocktail bars were asked in order to find out their awareness and popularity.</p> <p>Total of 247 responses were collected from all over Finland and analyzed. According to the survey, clear elements, like atmosphere, cleanliness, good customer service and friendly staff were rated the highest in every element-specific question. Main reasons for visiting same bars again were atmosphere, good customer service and good tasting cocktails. As for the factors of positive customer experiences, the respondents valued customer focus and professionalism. The results of this research were positive, and I was able to answer my research questions, even though the original plan about interviewing customers at cocktail bars was changed.</p>	
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## 1 Introduction

What do the fictional characters, 007 agent James Bond, and Carrie Bradshaw, highly successful columnist living her best life in New York, have in common? Both of them, along with many other famous movie characters, loved to enjoy their signature cocktails after a long day. These fictitious characters took cocktail drinking to a whole new level which inspired bar keepers and started a popular trend all over the world. (Harrison 2015.) There is a term called the 'cocktail revolution' which is used to describe the rise of cocktails in the beginning of the 90's (Bustamante 2019). The revolution did not only change the way cocktails are being made, but also the way cocktail bars are now being created. The popularity of cocktail bars has been rising for many years and new innovative and exciting bar concepts are being created all the time. (Russon & Gelbart 2018.)

Helsinki has also been doing its best and is slowly but surely participating in the cocktail trend. A company called 'Son of a Punch' has been a big part of the cocktail and bar culture in Helsinki, as one by one, they have opened new trendy cocktail bars around the city. Today, Son of a Punch has five different bars and restaurants and is the leading company in the cocktail game in Finland. (Son of a Punch.) I will be explaining more about Son of a Punch, their concept and classy bars later in this thesis. Other cocktail bars will also be introduced later on, as they are vital part of this research.

Nowadays, Helsinki's restaurant industry has grown tremendously and there is always something for everyone. The cocktail bars in Helsinki are cozy, trendy and use high quality materials. There are lot more options than meets the eye. (Heinäemies 2017) This research is a great tool for cocktail bars especially in Helsinki area, but also to other bars around the world. This research uses information gathered from cocktail bar customers and cocktail consumers, so bars are able to use this information as a guide on how to improve and develop their business. Especially as the world changes at a rapid pace, new trends are constantly emerging, and companies need to evolve according to the wishes of the customers. Bars can take advantage of the results and implement the results of this thesis into their own business. The results will also help me get the right kind of idea about what customers are looking for in a bar and what are the "must have" elements when establishing my own bar.

Customer experience has a big role in the research. I have chosen four specific cocktail bars located in Helsinki and I was personally going to visit them as well as interview some customers on the spot. Now, however things have changed all over the world because of

the coronavirus (Covid-19) which started to spread in Finland just when I was about to visit my chosen bars. The bars in Finland have now been closed, so I have decided to use quantitative research method instead and create a survey to share on Facebook. One section of the survey focuses on my chosen bars, which are Chihuahua Julep, (The One Bar) Flavourium, Goldfish and Trilby and Chadwick. These bars were chosen based on whether or not they classify themselves as cocktail bars, customer reviews and friends' suggestions.

### **1.1 Thesis objectives and research question**

The main objective of this thesis is to find out the best elements that customers find most important when visiting a cocktail bar. Therefore, the main research question is:

- What are the elements that make an effective and popular cocktail bar?

The sub-questions are:

- What are the factors that make customers want to revisit a bar?
- What does a good customer experience depend on?
- What things need to be considered when starting your own bar?

For the most extensive results, it is important to study the main question from all the different angles and that is why these sub-questions were chosen. For example, one of my goals is to find out what makes a good customer experience. Whether if it's expensive ingredients and decorations or quality customer service. I will also look for things that need to be taken into consideration, when opening your own bar like facilities, equipment and marketing. Key terms such as elements, effective, customer satisfaction and customer experience are all defined in the beginning of the cocktail theory and history chapter.

This thesis is research-oriented which means I need to gather as much information about this topic as possible. As previously mentioned, the original plan was to visit my chosen bars in person, observe them, make some notes and compare them with each other. I was going to interview at least two customers in every bar allowing me to receive plenty of answers and different perspectives regarding the main research question. In addition to interviews I was going to hand out a short questionnaire to anyone who agrees to participate in my research. I was hoping to get at least 50 answers to the survey. Unfortunately, due to coronavirus the Finnish government has decided to close all the restaurants and bars which means I am not going to be able to visit the bars or interview

any customers. Instead, I am using a quantitative method and creating a survey which I will send in multiple Facebook groups to receive more results.

## **1.2 Narrowing down the topic**

The original idea was to research regular bars and pubs in Helsinki, but the topic was narrowed down due to the fact that Helsinki has many pubs that are rather plain appearance-wise or look too similar to each other. Cocktail bars were chosen because they are currently trending in hospitality industry and because I am planning on owning a cocktail bar in the future.

The reason cocktail bars are so fascinating to us is that only sky is the limit. Owners can create something no one has ever seen before, while on the other hand, some owners can stick to the more traditional and fancy concepts and make it still work. Whatever the concept is these bars “must make an effort to stand out in this industry with creative marketing and branding strategies, strategically priced products, and proper customer segmentation” (Sciglimpaglia & Whitt 2018).

Finding proper sources specifically about cocktail bar might be the biggest difficulty for me so far, as there are not that many academic texts about them, even though cocktail bars have been around for quite some time now. However, I have found excellent articles and books which have a strong connection to my thesis, so those are some of the best sources that form my thesis.

## **2. History and theory of cocktails**

This part of the thesis dives deeper into the cocktail world and the evolution. In this section, the reader will understand what cocktails are and how they have become so popular over these decades. Famous cocktail bars all over the world will be introduced and used as examples to benefit the research. The business side of cocktail bars is also covered when I explain what is needed to set up a bar and what are best methods for marketing a cocktail bar.

First, however, the most important terms for the research need to be explained, because these terms may be understood in many different ways. I chose to define these terms because they are big part of the research and it is important that the reader knows exactly what I mean by each of them. Different elements play a big role in this research so that is why they should also be defined before moving to the theoretical part. Customer experience and satisfaction will be explained, as well as what customer satisfaction means in a cocktail bar environment. Lastly, I will explain what I mean by the term 'effective', because it can mean several different things.

### **2.1 Different cocktail bar elements**

Element can be defined in various different ways. Cambridge Dictionary, however, defines the word element like this; "one of the parts of something that makes it work, or a quality that makes someone or something effective" (Cambridge Dictionary). In this research, chosen elements will be the features that affect and form the whole bar. How the bar looks inside, where it's located, does the bar have a theme, how are the employees dressed like, how clean is the bathroom? The list goes on, simply because the list of elements is so extensive.

Interior, mood lighting and layout of the bar are called design elements. Because these design elements are like a foundation to any bar, it is very important they are customized properly. (Sheppard 2019.) Another interesting design element is the design of the menus. A Journal by John T. Bowen and Anne J. Morris (1995) focuses on the menu designs and whether or not it will increase sales. Back then, they did not have enough evidence to confirm the claim, but today, with the development of the internet, bar owners are constantly trying to stand out from the competition. Nowadays menus can in fact improve

sales, so that's why they need to stand out and be something totally unique. When designing new menus, creativity is always rewarded. (Magyarics 2018.)

Element also includes things like atmosphere, location and price. The last two are obviously very important, but atmosphere is something the owners must create all by themselves. For instance, if a bar has elements of nature, it can allow customers to experience the real atmosphere of a wanted location. (Stone, Soulard, Migacz & Wolf 2017.) A great example of this is a German restaurant chain called 'Hans im Glück' where the whole space is decorated with huge birch trees, so it gives its customers a feeling as if they were actually sitting in a forest (Keller 2019).

I have gathered up the most common elements that customers pay attention to in a bar. These elements were selected based on various articles about cocktail bars and the factors that make them so unique. Examples of these components are location, atmosphere, customer service and staff, concept, interior, pricing, product selection and capacity alias the number of seats in the bar (Square). These are also the elements that I will be taking into consideration once I will create my online survey.

## **2.2 Customer satisfaction and customer experience**

Customer satisfaction is the goal every single company pursues. Their main objective is to notice the need customers have and aim to fulfill it the best way possible. Customers who are satisfied, buy a certain product again because they are already aware of what they will get. In other words: "They do not pay for the product in a physical sense, but they pay for value or what they expect from the product" (Biesok & Wyród-Wróbel 2011, pp. 24).

Once customer satisfaction is positive, it is more likely for them to repurchase the product as well as recommend it to others. Because customer satisfaction is a feeling, the way of measuring it can be difficult and there is not just one universal way of doing so. Every company (depending on what they are selling) has their own set of information that they use to help measure customer satisfaction. (Biesok & Wyród-Wróbel 2011, pp. 32.) In bar environment, the measuring tools would be for example the number of sold drinks and spirits or the average headcount of customers. Just like with the menu design, the uniqueness of drinks and how they are being presented to customers, are factors that generate customer satisfaction. Experiences that are personal are more memorable and good memories are always connected to positive customer satisfaction. (Stone & al. 2017.) Cocktail bars should pay close attention to creating memorable and new experiences every single time a customer walks into the bar – that's how customer satisfaction is created.



In order to achieve customer satisfaction, unique experiences need to be created. Customer experience is a term that describes the relationship between the company and their customers, and it relates to every single experience customer has had with the company. Like mentioned before, the more personal the experience, the better. "Experiences are personal and exceptional, they involve customers perception and participation, engage customers emotionally, shared with others and remembered for a while" (Sharma & Rather 2015, pp. 22).

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), there are four dimensions in customer experience. These dimensions can also be referred to as the four E's. Aesthetic experience is focusing on the physical environment around customer. Therefore, by combining positive features with the customer experience, customers can also find themselves in a much more positive and satisfying environment in the end. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, pp. 32.) Entertainment experience is the second dimension. This dimension is especially important to hospitality industry, because people always want to be entertained when traveling, dining or for example having a drink in a bar. Entertainment should be carefully tailored to fit specific customer groups. In a bar environment, suitable entertainment could be for instance live band performance. Third dimension is educational, which means that customers should be actively participating and learning new things. 'Create your own cocktail' -workshop is an excellent way of educating customers while they are having fun. The last dimension, escapist experience, is probably the trickiest because it requires active participation. Escapist experiences are harder to create because they are extremely immersive and demand customers to be completely absorbed in the activity. One of the best examples of an escapist experience is a visit to an amusement park where the visitor is being absorbed into a completely extraordinary and magical world. (Sharma & Rather 2015, pp. 22-23.) Each of these dimensions has an important role in creating positive experiences and forming a larger entity towards the goal of customer satisfaction.

### **2.3 Effective**

When something is well-functioning and successful it can also be described as effective. An effective company sets their own desired goals and achieves them while still making profit. Bar, restaurant and café management resource called 'Successful Bar Secrets' has listed some qualities of an effective bar. The list includes bars who are regularly busy, handling well under pressure, keeping the menu fresh and educating customers with new things. Obviously, that's not all bars need to provide, but that is a good way to start. The

main highlight to success is nevertheless a bar that is “all about the customers” (Successful Bar Secrets 2020).

Efficiency does not happen by itself and that’s why companies need to measure, track and improve their performance by using different kind of measuring tools such as measures of effectiveness (MOE) and key performance indicator (KPI). These are important tools to any company as they are used for tracking and monitoring the most essential factors of a business. For instance, in a cocktail bar environment the owner should track the average amount of drinks and food sold per head in a night. On the contrary, an important point of monitoring is also the loss of products or wastage that gets thrown in the trash on a daily or weekly basis. Business owners need to research the best MOE’s and KPI’s for their business in particular, because the incorrect selection or amount of tracking systems may only cause damage to the company (Successful Bar Secrets 2020). When all the proper matters which affect the business are brought under control the company is closer to a more effective future.

## **2.4 What is a cocktail?**

Cocktail is a drink that’s mixed with one or more ingredient. It is important to mix the right kinds of ingredients in order to have a cocktail that tastes delicious. The first recorded cocktails were much simpler than they are today, and the word ‘cocktail’ only referred to specific ingredients like small selection of alcohols, sugar, water and bitters. ‘The Balance and Columbian Repository’ of Hudson, New York published the first definition of cocktail in 1806. They defined cocktail as “a stimulating liquor composed of any kind of sugar, water and bitters, vulgarly called a bittered sling” (Ford 2013).

The origin of the word ‘cocktail’ is still not certain, but there are many theories about it. Some say the word comes from a rooster whose tail feathers used to be the garnish of a Colonial drink. Some stories talk about a draft horse whose tail was docked which made it to stick up just like a cock’s tail. (Graham 2020.) Today, the word ‘cocktail’ has a different meaning to what it once used to be. New cocktails are being created all the time but the classic cocktails like Margarita, Mojito or Old Fashioned, are drinks every bartender should know how to make.

### **2.4.1 Cocktail ingredients**

Liquor is the key component of any cocktail and the most basic liquors include vodka, gin, tequila, rum, whiskey and bourbon. These are the main six liquors, with which bartenders can prepare already hundreds of drinks. (Graham 2019.) After liquor come the mixers; the

non-alcoholic liquids like sodas, bitters, different kinds of juices, fruits, milks and creams. Their role is to give flavor to the drink and also add nice and cheery color to it. Colorful drinks are not only fun, but make the drinks look more intriguing and better selling. Nowadays it is a trend to share cool and flashy pictures online and let the others know where the drink was prepared. Cocktails with fancy presentations will encourage customers to post more pictures on social media which in turn brings more visibility to the bar. Social media platform called 'Instagram' is the leading tool with pictures and with the search word 'cocktail' it is possible to find over 23.6 million shared pictures of gorgeous looking drinks after another. (Galante 2019.)

An essential part of a good cocktail is the ice, because ice is "the most used ingredient in the bar" (Graham 2019). Almost every single cocktail is prepared with ice and the quality of it can be very crucial in the process phase. Ice chills the cocktails as well as balances the flavor between the spirits and other mixers. Different kinds of ice have different kinds of effect on the drink. For example, ice cubes are good for shaking (in a cocktail shaker), while crushed ice is perfect for blenders when creating thick cocktails. Two other common ice types are cracked ice and block ice. Cracked ice is being used with frozen drinks and block ice can be shaped into any figure possible. Cocktails that does not require ice are for example hot drinks like Irish Coffee. (Graham 2020.)

Once the actual liquid mixing is done, the cocktail can (and should) be decorated. Garnishing is the official word for this process. Garnishes are the finishing touch to the cocktail, and they can be as creative as possible. A simple cocktail's appearance can change tremendously when its being garnished with for example an edible apple shaped like a star or flower. Some drinks can even be garnished with either salt or sugar around the edges of the cocktail glass. The important thing to remember, though, is that the garnish has to match and balance the flavor of the cocktail. (Alexander 2019.)

The very basic garnishes include citrus fruits like lemon, lime and orange. Herbs are also great garnishes because not only do they look beautiful they deliver inviting scent. Popular herbs used in cocktails are mints, rosemary and lavender. Some other popular garnishes include olives, cinnamon, celery and fruits. (Graham 2019.) Today, the garnishes are getting even crazier and more creative as some bars decorate their cocktails with small snacks like mini doughnuts or burgers. Sweet treats like chocolate, caramel and all sorts of sweet and sour candies are also a new trend (Simon 2016). This is an excellent proof of how sky is only the limit when it comes to cocktail decorating.

### **2.4.2 Cocktail tools and mixing techniques**

Having a functional bar means more than just an elegant interior and skilled staff. In order to make excellent cocktails you need to have the right tools that are designed for that purpose. In addition to traditional bar tools which are for example cutting boards, knives and spoons, there are other tools that are not so common to the average person. Cocktail shaker is a metal container designed for shaking typically liquor, juices, ice and other possible ingredients. Some shakers come with a built-in strainer, so it is easier to pour the drink into a glass. The traditional shakers are called the Cobbler and the Boston shaker. (Simmons 2011.) If a shaker does not come with a strainer, it can be purchased separately. Strainers are used when no ice is wanted in the glass. Strainer has small holes to prevent ice or pieces of fruit falling into the glass with the liquid. (McCutchen 2019.)

In order to know how much alcohol is poured in each drink, bartenders use a measuring cup. This tool can also be called a Jigger. Jigger is a cone shaped shot glass that has two sides in different sizes. The use of Jigger can be very efficient and fast especially if many cocktails are prepared at the same time. Muddler is a tool you crush fruits, herbs or spices with to get out the best aromas as possible. For example, Mojito is a drink where Muddler is being used to smash limes and mint leaves. The longer the Muddler the better, because it is easier to handle and press to the bottom of a glass or a shaker. (McCutchen 2019)

Lastly, there is glassware. This means the glass, bowl or container the cocktail is served. Technically, it is okay to use any kinds of glasses, but it is appropriate to serve the right amount of alcohol from the right sized glass. That is why for each cocktail, there is usually the right kind of glassware. Collins-, Old Fashioned (Rocks)-, and Martini glasses are the three most common ones that can be seen in many bars in the World. Collins glass is tall and narrow, whereas Old Fashioned glass is short and wide. Both of these glasses are typically filled with ice and that is the reason Old Fashioned glasses can also be called “on the rocks” glasses. Drinks in Martini glass are generally served without ice. That is why the glass has a long stem so that the beverage does not warm up so quickly. (Simmons 2011.) Image 1 below shows a cocktail station with all previously mentioned tools; two shakers and jiggers, different kinds of garnishes and Martini glasses.



Image 1. Cocktail station (ImipolexG. 2007. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Once the ingredients and tools are in order, preparing of the cocktail can begin. Various mixing techniques are being used for this phase in which the most famous ones are shaking, stirring, blending, building and layering. Because cocktails will taste different based on the way you mix them, it is important to know which cocktail requires which technique. Shaking is the most common way of mixing and it is typical to mix drinks that contain juice, dairy, syrup and thicker liquor. First step of shaking is to add ice. The ice will make the drink a lot colder and littler bit of water will also dissolve into the drink. After the ice, all the ingredients are poured separately into a shaker. The typical shaking time is about 15 seconds, but there are some drinks which you have to shake longer. The shaking should be done in a repetitive motion and very powerfully. (Simmons 2011) A gentler technique for mixing ingredients is called stirring. Stirring is done with a long metal stick or a bar spoon and the main goal is to let all the ingredients to mix lightly. There are drinks that are served without ice, even though stirring is done with them. Unlike with the shaker, stirring must be slow and smooth so the ingredients will not spill out everywhere. (Graham 2019.)

When cocktails contain ingredients like fruits, they need to be blended. All ingredients are placed in a blender, after which crushed ice can be added the last. Blending should always start in a slow speed and only then more power can be added. A good blending time would be about 10 seconds, after which the drink should be stirred to see if there are any chunks. It is okay to blend more, if the texture is still chunky. (Graham 2019.) Building is one of the easiest techniques when making drinks. Drinks are being 'built' by pouring each ingredient into the glass on by one. When building drinks, the order must be taken

into consideration as it affects the taste of the drink. Usually liquor goes in first after which juices or sodas are added. Some built drinks can also be stirred as well as shaken in a glass they were built in. (Graham 2019.)

Layering is a technique where multiple liquids are being poured in the glass on top of each other creating a cool looking drink or a shot. Usually this method is used with different kind of colors to create a 'rainbow' effect. (Graham 2019.) When layering a drink, the heaviest liquids are poured in first to prevent them from falling to the bottom of the glass later and ruining the other layers. Layering is best done with a bar spoon that is held upside down. As the liquor is being poured over the backside of the spoon, the spoon is lifted slowly along the edge of the glass as the glass fills up (Graham 2019). An example of a layered drink is a cocktail called 'Tequila Sunrise' where the bottom half of the drink is red and the top half bright yellow as can be seen in image 2.



Image 2. Tequila Sunrise (TheCulinaryGeek. 2010. CC BY 2.0)

### **2.4.3 Mocktails**

In today's modern world it's important to provide multiple options for customers no matter what the business is. The food and beverage industry is no different as health and wellbeing are becoming more and more important to us. "Increase in awareness of various health problems associated with alcohol has shifted the consumer preference from alcoholic drinks toward nonalcoholic drinks" (Bavar 2018). These drinks are now known to be called mocktails or 'virgin cocktails'. The word mocktail simply comes from the words 'mock' and 'cocktail'. Mocktails have been around for decades, but in the old

days they used to look very plain and unimaginative. Nowadays mocktails are becoming more and more popular and many bars are adding more of them to their menu. (Danovich 2015.)

Even though mocktails have no alcohol in them, the presentation and taste are everything. Bartenders are testing their limits as they come up with the most innovative ingredients and decorations to make mocktail drinks look just as amazing as regular cocktails. Not so typical ingredients like spices, herbs and vegetables are used to creating something that is tasty and fresh – something “just as good without alcohol as with” (Danovich 2015). Mocktails are perfect for designated drivers, pregnant women and people who simply do not want their drink to include alcohol, but the market is much wider.

Especially an age group called Millennials are often going for the healthier and more environmentally friendly options. Millennials are people born between 1989 and 1996 and they have personality traits that diverge from the other generations. Millennials are strong supporters of for example climate change, equality, justice and peace. That is why they favor companies who take their interests into account. (Cheng 2019.)

Millennials are also extremely tech-savvy and socially aware, because they have grown with digital devices. Popular trend among them is to share pictures on social media and promote certain products or businesses. The cooler the picture is going to be, the more it is going to get likes and views. That is why cocktail bars need to not only offer nonalcoholic drinks, but also make them look as fancy as the regular ones. Colorful drink (nonalcoholic or not) is always a plus and has a higher chance of being photographed and shared by a millennial. (Galante 2019.)

## **2.5 The rise of cocktail bars**

Alcohol and bars have been around for over thousands of years. The very first drinks that people have been enjoying are mostly beer and wine, but in the 1800s cocktails were also introduced by sailors who mixed different kinds of spirits, sugar, water and spices. Slowly this mixture started to spread around the world and became especially popular in Europe and America. (Man’s World.) In 1862 a book with different cocktails and techniques was introduced for the first time by an American bartender named Jerry Thomas (LiquorLand 2017). The publication of “The Bartenders Guide” led to a boom and many bar keepers started making new different kinds of cocktails. Many also followed Thomas’ footsteps and started writing down their own cocktail recipes and shared them with other bar owners. (Man’s World.)

In the 1800s bartending was one of the most valued and highest paying jobs in America and a dream city for cocktail lovers. All the ingredients were made from scratch and even the ice was carved and shipped to different states and countries from Boston. As the prohibition era began, cocktail bars started to fall. Between the 1920 to 1933 selling, producing and transporting any alcohol was banned, but that didn't mean people weren't still drinking it. To everyone's surprise, the drinking went underground, and many Jazz clubs and speakeasies were created. Some bartenders left the country and traveled to large European cities where they would prepare creating their own cocktails and unknowingly creating the first American cocktail bars in Europe. (Man's World.) Even today, there are many famous cocktail bars around Europe which were created by the runaway American bartenders. A great example is Hotel Savoy's award-winning bar which is still to this day called 'The American Bar' (Savoy).

After the prohibition, cocktails bars returned to the streets of New York and new cocktails were created rapidly. The rum-based Tiki cocktails like Mai Tai were especially popular, but another liquor was yet to be discovered. (LiquorLand.) Vodka became highly popular in the 60's, because of an action movie character James Bond who enjoyed his martini 'shaken, not stirred'. After that, vodka sales went up and it is still to this day one of the most globally used spirits. (Man's World.) The 60's was also the golden age of glorious cocktail parties where alcohol, cigarettes and finger food were the main attractions (LiquorLand). Nowadays the '60's cocktail party' is a very popular party theme and the internet is full of instructions of the drinks and food that was served back then.

In the 90's, chain restaurants and bars started to appear and change the cocktail industry. Which once was a cocktail made with great effort and skill, turned into a quickly made and tasteless moneymaker. In order to get as much sales as possible, bartenders prepared drinks like machines without paying much attention on the appearance or taste of the drinks. "Customers got value for money, but the art of mixing drinks was nearly lost" (Man's World). Nowadays these chains such as TGIF (Thank God It's Friday) still exist, but as cocktails are becoming more popular, new bars with creative concepts are constantly opening.

One popular bar trend are modern speakeasies which are on the rise and gaining popularity. Speakeasies are trying to bring back the 1920 vibes of the Prohibition Era and hide the bars with a hidden entrance. If customer finds a speakeasy and wants to enter, the most common way is usually by ringing a secret doorbell or enter through a phone booth or some kind of a trick wall. (Mancall-Bitel 2017.) Today's customers want to be amazed and experience something they have not seen before. And while some bars are



entertaining guests with for example live performances or music quizzes, speakeasies trust the element of surprise and mystery. With the rise of internet, speakeasies are much easier to find than they used to be, but the hunt is still very exciting for customers. Some speakeasies are decorated just the like bars in the 20's and look really authentic with their leather furniture and dark lighting, while some have redesigned their interior and are trying out bolder options like neon lights and more modern interiors. (Mancall-Bitel 2017.) As the bars evolved, so did the drinks. Even though customers can now also order craft beer, wine or long drinks, speakeasy is not convincing if they are not serving the same kind of cocktails that were served during the 20's. The only difference is that during Prohibition Era cocktails did not taste particularly good, but now (in addition to excellent service) bartenders are really focusing on the taste and using high-quality ingredients. (Paige 2019.)

The internet has changed the way cocktails are being prepared and nowadays basically anyone can become a skilled bartender by watching clips on a video-sharing platform called YouTube. However, not anyone can be a bartender just like that. Nowadays, bartenders need to be well trained, start from the bottom and slowly rise to the top, in order to work in a bar. Bartending school are a great option for someone interested in mixing drinks and have become quite trendy in the past decade. (Akhtar 2020.)

The world is designed to evolve and move forward. However, one thing at cocktail bars has remained the same all these years. People have always gone to the bars to enjoy and spend their free time and that is how it's going to be in the future. Whether it is with friends, co-workers or alone, cocktail bars are open to anyone who enjoys a cool tasty beverage. Because in the end bars are not just about the drinking, but about getting together, sharing stories and meeting up with old and possibly new friends. (Paige 2019.)

## **2.6 Cocktail bars around the world**

As explained in the previous chapter, cocktail bars have changed quite a bit over the past centuries and that is also why people today have more higher standards when it comes to cocktail bars. For this section, I have researched creative cocktail bars with different concepts around the world. Surprisingly, many of the bars I saw turned out to be speakeasies, which just proves my point about them becoming more popular all the time. I will be introducing three cocktail bars – one speakeasy from London, New York cocktail bar that breaks all the cocktail bar rules and lastly an underwater bar in Maldives. I have chosen these bars in particular, because I wanted to introduce three completely different cocktail bars with very different locations and concepts. I found these bars by randomly

scrolling through the internet and reading feedbacks of other world travelers on TripAdvisor.

London is one of the leading cities when it comes to amazing and innovative cocktails bars. Especially speakeasies seem to be London's specialty and there are crazy bars one after another in every part of the city. From old police stations (TT Liquor) to old public bathrooms (CellarDoor), Londoners really know how to invent new bars and the best part is, there is little something for everyone. (Hoole 2018.) The next cocktail bar I am about to introduce, however, is something pretty extraordinary.

'The Mayor of Scaredy Cat Town' is a speakeasy located in east London, but the catch is the entrance which is nowhere to be seen. In Artillery Lane, there is a coffeehouse called 'The Breakfast Club' where customer needs to enter and inform the waiters that they are "meeting up with the Mayor". After this, one of the staff members will assist the guest in front of a normal looking refrigerator, which can be seen in image 3, where the guest will go through and arrive to the dimly lit speakeasy.



Image 3. The Mayor of Scaredy Cat Town entrance (Matt.zell.er 2018)

Their menu is filled with clever ingredients like rhubarb, cinnamon and even homemade popcorn. The cocktails are cleverly named, and the average price is 10 euros. In addition

to cocktails, they offer wine, craft beer, cider and various little bar snacks. The Mayor also offers a bottomless brunch every Saturday and Sunday, where on top of the food, customers get unlimited drinks for two hours. The brunch costs about 40 euros. The interior is very strange, but personal with lot of silly wall art and vintage furniture. (Hoole 18.) The only minus is that the bar closes already at midnight which is very early compared to other London's bars (The Mayor of Scaredy Cat Town).

We cannot talk about cocktail bars without mentioning New York. That is why the second bar is located in Brooklyn, New York but it is definitely not what you would expect. When thinking about New York, you immediately picture tall skyscrapers and sparkly rooftop bars. A cocktail bar called 'Yours Sincerely' is nothing like that and that is why their clever but simple concept needs to be mentioned. Yours Sincerely is the first sustainable draft-only cocktail bar in New York. In other words, the cocktails are poured into a glass straight from the tap just like craft beers. Actually, instead of glasses the bar uses different sizes of beakers to maintain the illusion of laboratory. (Sheinbaum 2016.) Their cocktail taps and science beakers can be seen in the Image 4 below.



Image 4. Yours Sincerely beakers and taps (yourssincerelybk 2017)

The owners Julian Mohamad and Darren Grenia describe the bar as a cocktail laboratory with “tasty af craft cocktails” (Yours Sincerely). It took two years for them to get the right kind of “formula” and some cocktails took longer than others to create. The process truly is very scientific because the cocktails need to be filtered three or four times, to prevent the ingredients from separating, before serving to customers. (Black 2017.) Nowadays they have 20 cocktails on tap and customers can even create their own drinks by mixing two or

more ingredients. Yours Sincerely cocktails cost 9 to 11 dollars and they have a happy hour every day where each and every cocktail is only 5 dollars. (Yours Sincerely.)

The menu design is very unique and creative, but it can be slightly confusing to some at first appearance. In addition to a traditional menu, Yours Sincerely has created a menu with a mind map which makes it easier for customers to order exactly the drink they desire at that moment. Image 5 shows their unique mind map menu and their cocktails, which are named humorously and inventively. Their menu includes wine, beer and soft drinks as well, but it would be a shame to order something so ordinary in such a unique place.

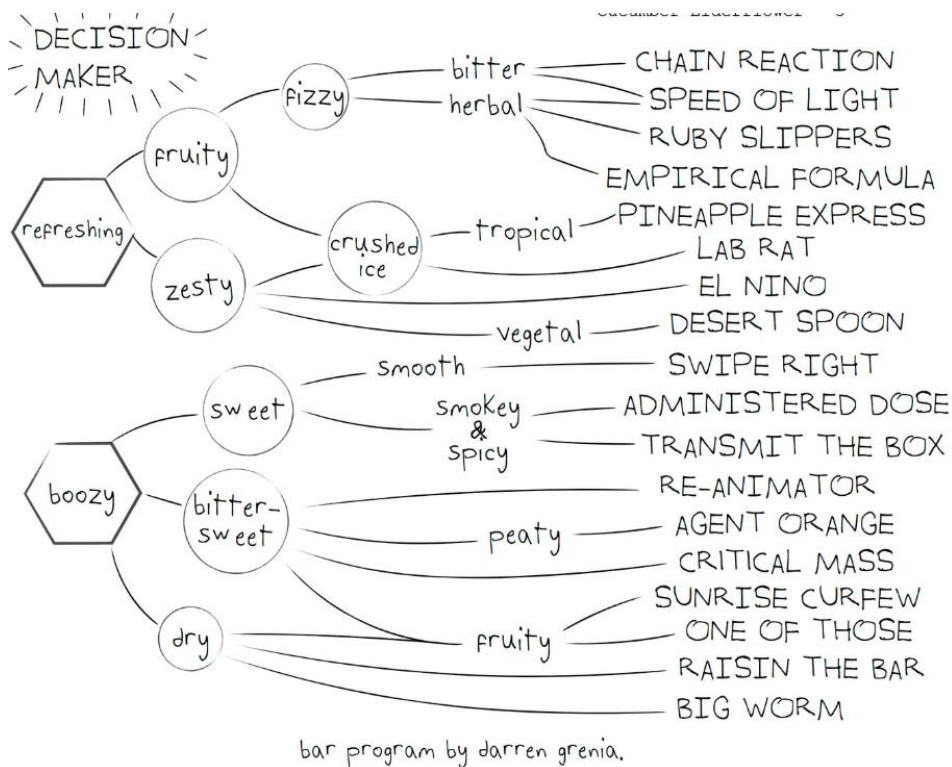


Image 5. Yours Sincerely's mind map presentation of the menu (Yours Sincerely)

The last bar 'Subsix' is located on an island in Maldives and it is one of the most unforgettable experiences a customer will have. The reason being, that the bar is located six meters under the sea. Per Aquum Niyama is a resort in the middle of the Indian Ocean, but that is not where Subsix is located. To reach the bar, customer need to take a short speedboat ride, since there is a 500-meter distance between Subsix and the resort.

Subsix was originally opened in 2012 as a night club, but today, it is operating also as a restaurant and a bar. Every Wednesday and Saturday night it transforms back to a club as the resort guests and other tourists get to experience their "Underwater Glow Parties".



Events like weddings, wine tastings and DJ nights are hosted regularly, but the bar can be transformed into basically anything the guests wants.

The theme of Subsix is obviously the sea and every element and decoration inside are connected to the ocean. In image 6 the beautiful venue can be seen which has, among other things, a deep blue lighting, clam-shaped chairs and chandeliers that look like corals. (Dreaming of Maldives.) The beverage menu is very extensive and consists of multiple great cocktail choices. One cocktail cost 18 dollars which is pretty expensive, but understandable considering the location. They also serve mocktails, wine, beer and soft drinks. The ocean theme can also be seen in their food menu, which contains delicious sea food options. (Niyama.)



Image 6. Subsix Restaurant and Bar interior (Niyama)

Like previously mentioned above, these three bars were chosen for various different reasons, but especially because of their unique concept. As tourism keeps growing, it has become more important to travelers to experience something new. Most people who travel want to try out new things and by creating concepts that stand out, customers are more intrigued to do so. Exceptional themes equal popularity because “memorable food and drink experiences have been linked to an increase in travel satisfaction and positive word of mouth” (Stone & al. 2017).

## **2.7 Things to consider when establishing a cocktail bar**

This section focuses on all the different factors that affect the profitability of a bar. Starting your own bar can be risky especially since the popularity of bars is growing and every city seems to be full of different kinds of bars already. Standing out from the crowd is tough but if all the needed steps are done correctly owning a bar can be very profitable (Diaz 2019). Luckily for entrepreneurs, the internet is full of instructions, articles and personal stories from others who have either succeeded or failed, so starting a business is much easier than it used to be.

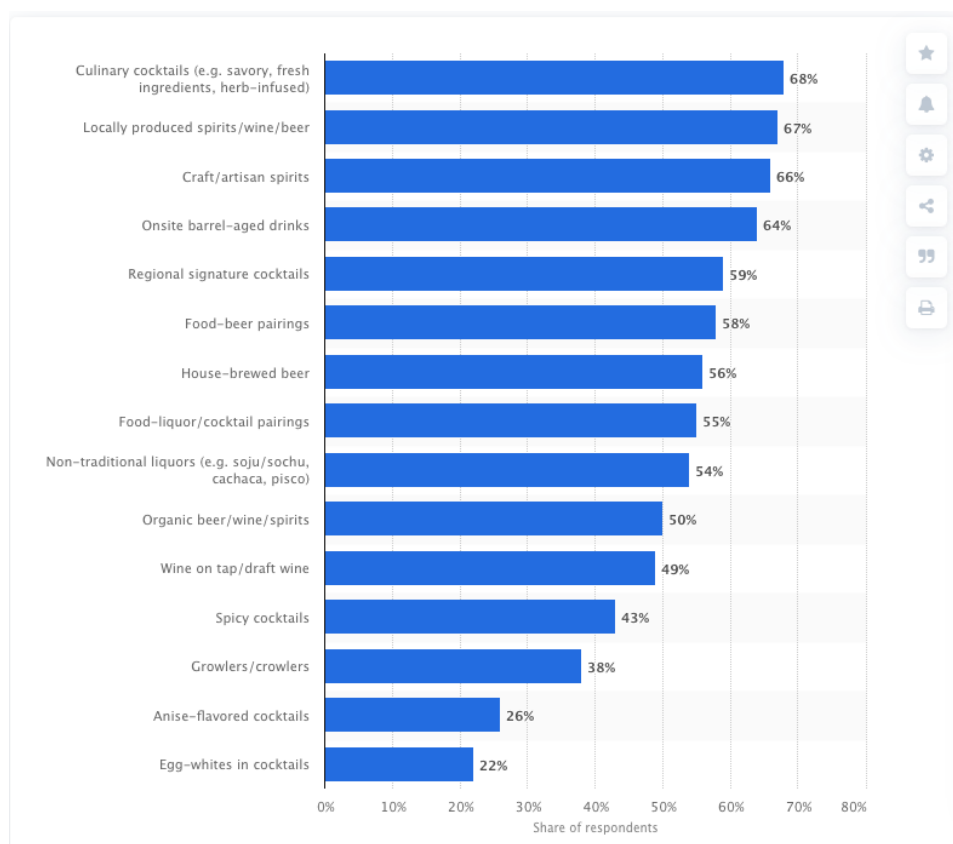
The first step towards a profitable bar is creating a proper business plan. It will be the very foundation of the whole business as the plan is a detailed description of the business and its practices where every single thing needs to be taken into consideration. Business plan should include things like company description, product/menu/price descriptions, market analysis and marketing strategies as well as financial plans and projections. (Diaz 2019.) Many hours of research are required when writing the plan because the more knowledge you have the easier the writing (and eventually the establishing) will be. A good advice is to let other people read it to get different viewpoints and potential problems from them well in advance. Business plan should also be shared with the possible partners in order to avoid any kind of confusion. (Garceau 2015.)

A bar is not a bar without required licenses and permits, the most important of which is the liquor license. The price of the license changes a lot depending on the country and city. For example, in Finland the current price for the license is 650 euros per year (Aluehallintovirasto) whereas the bar owners in New York pay up to 4500 dollars every two years (Tarver 2019). Bar owner needs to be aware of all the permits needed so the business does not get shut down before it is even opened. The applications and business registrations may take very long time, so the owner needs to start applying as soon as possible (Garceau 2015). Another thing that affects the profitability of bars are the possible partners, distributors and the staff. Especially the staff is worth investing in, because they are the ones in contact with customers, selling the products and creating the atmosphere. The staff needs to be trained to become aware of the sold products, the right ways of preparing them as well as using the equipment correctly. If bar's interior looks amazing but the clumsy and ignorant staff does not know what they are doing, customers' image is broken, and they might not return. (Diaz 2019.)

As previously stated, menus can also create sales. That is, of course, if the menu is designed correctly and for the right kind of audience. Customer base should be carefully considered, and the menu should be developed according to them. Especially in the case of a cocktail bar, the owner needs to know what kind of drinks customers like and want to

drink. The menu affects which products to order from distributors and how big the order should be. The company needs to keep a record of all the sold products so that they do not order too little or too much. The business plan should include detailed description of all the products needs as well as their pricing and costs. (Diaz 2019.) In graph 1 below, you can see the leading trends in bar and restaurant industry in the US in 2018. Culinary cocktails are on top of the list with 68% but there is only one percent difference to locally produced spirits, wine and beer. These are the kind of things customers currently want to see in the menus and it is important that especially new bar owners know what products are selling today.

Graph 1. Leading trends in alcohol items on restaurant menus in the United States in 2018 (Statista.com)



When opening a new bar, the location should be carefully considered. Of course, the most ideal location is where all the hustle is but unfortunately establishing a bar is not always possible there. Typically, the ideal location would be in the city center close to everything or perhaps located even in a shopping center. Whatever the case, different permits are also needed for the location, depending on how big the space is and whether it has special feature like terrace. Bars that are close to residential buildings might get in trouble with the citizens for being too loud. Location should on the other hand be in sync with the

concept and style of the bar. Bars with chill and hipster style should not be located to classy and sophisticated areas. (Diaz 2019.)

Much like location, equipment should be in connection with the theme. Equipment includes all the cocktail making tools, glassware and dishes, furniture and extra decorations that put together the bar's theme (Diaz 2019). There is a restaurant and cocktail bar in Helsinki called 'Laava' where every room has a unique theme. Their equipment, decorations, menu, glassware and sounds are all tailored according to the room and each room has a completely different atmosphere. Laava has eight different theme rooms and a changing menu. They market themselves as an "experience for all senses" and a place where "flavor meets imagination". (Laava.com.)

Below are figures 1 and 2, I have made based on researching about this topic. These graphs show all the necessary steps that need to take into account when opening a drink bar. I have made the graphs by combining various sources and picking out the steps that were mentioned the most. There are ten steps in total starting with the research phase and ending with the grand opening.

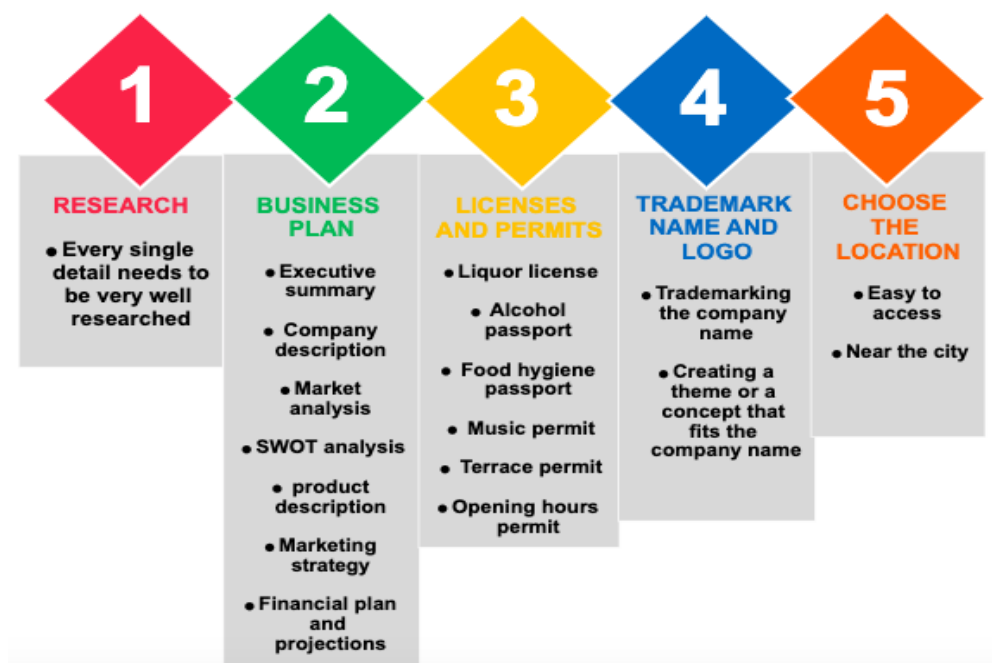


Figure 1. Steps 1-5 of opening a new bar





Figure 2. Steps 6-10 of opening a new bar

Lastly, I would like to point out the latest trend in hospitality industry which is sustainability. Many restaurants have already started the change towards more environment friendly options, but bars are coming little behind on this. Some American cities are trying to restrict the use of plastic and have introduced various laws about the use of it. "In 2018 we saw some major progress as the issue of plastic straws hit the mainstream consciousness". Sustainability is a big theme that is not going to disappear any time soon, so it is vital that the bar owners take that fact into consideration and alter their bar and strategy properly. (Tunstall 2019.)

## 2.8 How to market a cocktail bar on social media

Marketing has changed a lot since the use of technology and different social media platforms have become more common. Marketing your own product has never been this easy and new ways of improving sales are created all the time. Online shopping has become a trendy new thing among the younger generation as they spend hours online searching for the right kind of product and just within few days, they already have it in their hands. Today, it is even possible to order food straight to your front door without meeting anyone in person. Bars on the other hand, cannot ship the drinks to people's home but instead need to get the customers come to them. That is the reason bars really need to invest in their marketing game and keep customers engaged as much as possible. Frankly, companies that do not invest enough in marketing will also not succeed in the industry for long. (Chen 2020.) The Finnish Alcohol Act is operated by a National

Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) and is very strict about what to market and advertise on social media. For example, alcohol beverages that have over 22% alcohol volume, cannot be advertised at all. (Valvira 2018.) This makes it very hard for the Finnish bar owners to create unique advertisements and display offers and deals we are used to seeing in the rest of the world. Finnish bar owners can still benefit from some of these recommendations about social media marketing just keeping in mind the regulations of Finland's alcohol policy.

The first step needed is a strong marketing strategy which should be created based on the cocktail bars ideal group of clients. Knowing the target market is important, helps the owner get started and gives an overall idea of the online platforms that should be used for marketing. Once the right social media channels have been identified it is time to start creating and sharing content in them. The most used social media platforms at the moment are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. In addition to these, it is important to make the company's own websites and create accounts to TripAdvisor and Yelp so customers can review the business and give possible feedback. With Facebook, Instagram and Twitter the amount of information shared with customers is crucial. The site should easily state all the necessary information like company name, contact information, opening hours, location and possible events. Another good thing to consider sharing is the menu as today people want to see what you have to offer. (Treece 2018.) Especially cocktail bars should include menu of their drink selection or at least mention and promote their signature cocktails somehow. In Finland, however, the marketing of strong liquors and sharing of the ingredients can only be done on companies own websites and is not allowed to be published on any other social media channel (Valvira 2018).

Facebook has changed a lot from what it once was and has now become a very useful tool for companies to gain visibility. Cocktail bars should share pictures of their amazing drinks, venue and customers. A smart way of getting more views is to share videos where bartenders are preparing bars signature drinks. Different kind of contests (where users need to tag their friends or like the post) have become popular and many people actually enjoy and participate in them. (Chen 2020.) These easy tricks give bars better chances of getting more followers, likes, comments and shares. Once again, things are not this simple when it comes to Facebook marketing in Finland. Sharing pictures of your drinks is allowed but advertising them is not. Owners are not allowed to encourage followers to share their published images (if it contains alcohol) which means that creating different competitions is not allowed as well (Valvira 2018).

Facebook allows companies to create their own Facebook Business Pages. This is a great feature because bars can now look at the analytics and track for example how many people visit the page and actually see their content. If the analytics do not look as good as they should, bars can boost their page or advertise themselves for a fee. Advertising is highly recommended because it “allows you to reach a highly targeted audience in your local area” (Treece 2018). Much like with TripAdvisor and Yelp, Facebook Business Page allows customers to write reviews and send messages directly to the page. In order to achieve good customer service, every feedback (good or bad) as well as every message should be answered. (Treece 2018.)

Instagram is a platform for every cocktail lover as the main focus is on sharing pictures. As I mentioned earlier, Instagram is the leading platform with pictures and especially millennials spent a lot of time there. “The platform is so important to Millennials that 30 percent of 18- to 35-year-olds avoid restaurants without a strong Instagram presence”. Just like in Facebook, Instagram also has a business account option which makes marketing and tracking publications much easier. (Treece 2018.)

Instagram uses signs called hashtags (#) which make it easier to find the images you are looking for. Popular hashtags like ‘food’ and ‘drink’ are used every single day and even with the hashtag ‘cocktail’ users can find millions of incredible looking drinks (Galante 2019) so the first thing a cocktail bar should do when posting a new picture is to add hashtags. The more hashtags are used, the more visibility they will get. In addition to hashtags, good caption is needed to explain what the picture is about. Whatever is happening in the bar (new event, change of menu, live music performance, 2 for 1 offers) needs to be shared because the followers definitely want to know about it. The appropriate number of new posts is at least one per day and especially new bars should be posting as actively as possible. Additionally, bars should share striking and creative short images and videoclips called ‘Instagram Stories’ which are visible only for 24 hours. (Treece 2018.) The stories could consist of tours around the bar, interviewing the guests and staff, filming the bartender make a cool looking drink, creating a poll or even a cocktail themed quiz. Being creative on Instagram is always a plus and will keep the followers interacted with the company.

Finnish cocktail bar owners can also be creative, but just in compliance with the Alcohol Act. Much like with Facebook marketing, Finnish bar owners need to be aware of what kind of content can be posted on their Instagram page. For instance, any kind of promotion that include free drinks is not allowed, meaning that “two drinks for the price of one” is not appropriate content on any Finnish platform. Also, bars are allowed to film

videos of the interior as well as publish pictures of their customers, but individual liquor bottles or customers enjoying strong drinks cannot be shown. (Valvira 2018.)

The last two platforms I would like to mention are Twitter and YouTube which have been around for 15 years already. Twitter has over 330 million monthly users and has very similar features to Instagram. Hashtags play an important role in Twitter, as they allow users to “follow and participate in conversations about trending topics in your industry” (Standberry 2019). Cocktail bars can use Twitter by sharing the latest brand updates, as well as actively following tweets about bar industry to stay on top of new trends. Sharing pictures and videos is also popular on twitter, but the main focus is still on posting real-time messages called ‘tweets’. Sharing other people’s tweets (retweeting) is big on Twitter and cocktail bars should use this tactic if they come across something that is related to their business. (Zatorski 2019.) Much like any other platform, Twitter offers advertising opportunities to promote your account and tweets. The advertisements will reach significantly higher number of users and provokes a lot of discussion. (Standberry 2019.)

YouTube is a platform some businesses do not necessarily need to use but because YouTube has over 2 billion monthly users it is highly recommendable to create content on there as well. YouTube is a video platform where users can watch and share videos. YouTube is owned by Google so businesses can benefit from this by using Google’s advertisement platform. Companies can create short ads, but they can also make their own YouTube channel where users can subscribe, comment, like and share the videos. (Zatorski 2019.) According to “The YouTube Generation Study” by Google and Ipsos Connect, 74% of YouTube users will watch brand channels weekly” (Standberry 2019). Making cocktails is interesting and cool looking so bars could make weekly videos where bartenders are showing their skills and preparing variety of drinks, even if they would be preparing just mocktails.

Whatever the used platform is, competition is fierce and those who do not know how to market properly are overshadowed by others. Cocktail bars need to constantly create something new and never-before-seen. One eye-catching tactic that many businesses use is to collaborate with social media influencers. Social media influencers are usually well known, not only domestically but also worldwide, and have a lot of followers. Influencers can, for example, attend bar events, share content from the event, and tag the bar to different channels. (Chen 2019.) In Finland, collaborations are done according to established laws, as also the influencer needs to be aware of the content that is okay to share to others. Especially new bar owners or influencers can accidentally share

something they are not supposed to and that's why an extensive guidance on marketing and selling alcohol by Valvira is published online for everyone to read (Valvira 2018).

### 3 Research phase

After researching cocktail bar history and theory it is time to move into the research phase. This chapter introduces the research methodology and explanations on why particular method was chosen. Four previously mentioned cocktail bars located in Helsinki are introduced as they are part of the research phase. For each bar, I am going to explain the concept, other interesting features and the reason it was chosen for my research. Lastly, I will explain how the data collection and analysis process were done.

#### 3.1 Cocktail bars used for this research

The first cocktail bar is called Chihuahua Julep. It was opened in 2018 and has an excellent location in the center of Helsinki in Erottajankatu, even though the bar has only 25 customer seats. The bar is classified as a cocktail bar, although it gives slight speakeasy vibes to its visitors. The windows are dimmed and the only way to enter is by ringing a doorbell. Image 7 shows Chihuahua Julep's webpage, what is just a one-page information package listing the opening hours, the address, the bar slogan and a small hint of the location with a hashtag #LookForTheDoorBell. (Chihuahua Julep.) For someone who wants to know more about the bar, that website is not suitable, but then again it stands out from the crowd and provokes a certain kind of interest and mystery. Bar's theme can be found in the name where "Chihuahua refers specifically to Mexico, and Julep refers to the cocktail culture in the early 20th century". Theme can also be seen in the interior which is divided to represent a Mexican living room as well as the more traditional, dim cocktail bar atmosphere (Lahti 2018) as illustrated in image 8 below.



Image 7. Chihuahua Julep's webpage (Chihuahua Julep)

Chihuahua Julep's slogan "The Agave Friendly Cocktail Bar" comes from the founders Minna Kettunen and Jami Järvinen as they emphasize on the greatness of the agave flavor. Their menu consists of several agave spirits such as Tequila and Mezcal and is overall focused on alcohols from the American continent. The entrepreneur couple has decided to completely set aside classic liquors like gin and vodka but emphasize that there is always something for everyone. Järvinen explains how every agave cocktail is an experience rather than just a drink and "the greater the taste, the greater the experience" (Lahti 2018). Chihuahua Julep offers cocktails with an edible garnish or a never-before-seen element to guarantee the great experience. The price of each cocktail varies between 13.50-14.50 euros. Image 9 is an example of their layered Mezcal cocktail called 'Rental Pineapple' with some edible pineapple slices on the side to complete the drink. Chihuahua Julep also promotes themselves as a cell phone free bar. When customers are not looking down at their screens, it creates more credible atmosphere that fits the bars theme. (Lahti 2018.)



Image 8. Chihuahua Julep interior (Chihuahuajulep 2020)



Image 9. Rental Pineapple cocktail (Chihuahuaajulep 2020)

This next cocktail bar was originally not on my list but made me change my mind once I visited the Helsinki Drink Festival on 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The Helsinki Drink Festival was organized in Ylioppilastalo and the upstairs area was dedicated to cocktail bars in Helsinki. There were a lot of excellent and well-known bars, but I was most impressed by the bar called Flavourium. They really stood out from the crowd with their stand, vibe and the most amazing looking cocktails and that is the reason I had to include them in my research.

Flavourium hosted its grand opening in The Mall of Tripla in Pasila on February 2020 becoming one of the newest cocktail bars in Helsinki (Flavourium). While I was doing my research about the bar, I found out that Flavourium is actually a restaurant which had expanded their business with a cocktail bar called 'The One'. At Helsinki Drink Festival, however, the bar was named Flavourium, so that made me a bit of confused at first.

The One cocktail bar is a re-creation of the award-winning cocktail bar A21, which used to locate in the very center of Helsinki in Annankatu. Customer can enjoy a great view while sipping drinks, because Flavourium is located on the fifth floor of the mall and one could call it the "Finnish version of a rooftop bar". In addition to restaurant and cocktail bar,



Flavourium also has a “Museum of Tastes” that will open its doors later this year. (Flavourium.) Based on this, one can deduce the theme of Flavourium, which is a combination and experimentation of different flavors.

The One’s cocktail menu is very extensive. The drinks are divided into different categories like the ‘World Tour’ where a specific city is chosen, and the taste of the cocktail is determined by that. Or a category called ‘Nordic’ where classic Finnish flavors such as sea buckthorn, birch or licorice can be explored as shown in image 10. Category ‘G&T Perfection’ is a combination of different sorts of gins, mixers and spices. The founders also wanted to honor the memory of the A21 cocktail bar, so an original A21 drinks and new Flavourium styled versions are available of the same drink. The bar also serves sparkling wine, champagne, wine, beer and lemonades but unfortunately, their menu doesn’t include prices of any of these. (Flavourium.)



Image 10. The Birch Cocktail (Theonebarflavourium 2020)

The third cocktail bar I am introducing is the Goldfish. It has been open for visitors for few years and markets themselves as the classiest cocktail bar in Helsinki. Located in Korkeavuorenkatu, Goldfish is part of the BW-Restaurants chain, founded by famous Finnish restaurateurs Tomi Björck and Matti Wikberg. This atmospheric and stylish bar has 45 seats and is divided into three different sized spaces. Goldfish describes the theme of the bar on their page like so: “The urban Goldfish draws inspiration from the library bars of London’s luxury hotels and the best cocktail bars around the world”. Björck

and Wikberg have made it very clear that their mission is to get on the international World's 50 Best Bars list, where no other Finnish cocktail bar has yet reached. (Goldfish.)

The main focus is creating something new, but international classics can also be found in their cocktail selection. Customers can expect new flavors and different approaches to cocktail making and serving. Björck and Wikberg find it especially important to share the ingredients used in every drink so customers know exactly what they are enjoying. That way customers learn to appreciate the drinks they consume more. Each cocktail uses fresh ingredients and homemade syrups and, as in most cocktail bars, is served directly to the table. (Paavilainen 2018.) Goldfish has a seasonally changing menu, but the average price for a cocktail is 14.50 euros. There is also a wide selection of wines and large variety of bar snacks fitted to match with the drinks. (Goldfish.) Image 11 shows Goldfish's creative cocktails and fancy looking bar snacks served on tiny plates.



Image 11. Cocktails and bar snacks served in Goldfish (goldfish\_helsinki 2019)

Out of my chosen cocktail bars, the last has been operating in Helsinki the longest. Trillby & Chadwick is a speakeasy close to the Market Square and it is part of a corporation called 'Son of a Punch' which was formed by two separate companies. The merge happened already in 2011 and the business has been growing ever since. As of today, Son of a Punch has four bars, a restaurant and many catering events. Their team consists of around 40 talented professionals who are passionate about the hospitality industry as

well as its rapidly changing concepts. Son of a Punch is constantly trying to come up with “new, innovative and creative projects” and “personalized service and wild concepts” with Trillby & Chadwick being one of them. (Son of a Punch.)

The speakeasies theme and name, Trillby & Chadwick, comes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century England from an active detective agency. The agency gained reputation solving “high-profile cases that were originally assigned to the Special Branch of London’s Metropolitan Police Service” (Son of a Punch). The entrance from the street is hidden and cannot be found unless you know it is there. The only way in is by ringing an old museum phone that is placed in the lobby. Inside, there are two hazy rooms with old-fashioned interior and the echoing music of 20<sup>th</sup> century jazz. The atmosphere is very mysterious, and it also shows on their Instagram page which mainly consists of black-and-white images as illustrated in image 12. The average price of one cocktail is 11 euros, which is quite low considering the Finnish price range. (Riikonen 2014.) Their menu was previously displayed in an old envelope, but now, based on their Instagram pictures, this is no longer the case. Nevertheless, the menu won the title of “Finland's best cocktail menu” in 2019 granted by Bartenders Choice Awards (sonofapunch).



Image 12. An image from Trillby & Chadwick’s Instagram (trillbyandchadwick 2019)

### 3.2 Research method and data collection

Because of the Covid-19 outbreak the government decided to close down all the restaurants and bars in Helsinki and keep them closed until further notice. This also meant I had to make changes to my research plans. I was looking forward to visiting and comparing all the bars mentioned above as well as doing qualitative research by interviewing customers but in view of the current situation, it was not possible to accomplish. Therefore, I decided to create a survey on Webropol. I chose this quantitative method, because it seemed like the next best thing which would give me a wide range of different opinions and answers related to my topic. With surveys, the number of respondents is a lot higher but interviewing someone face to face gives you more reliable and in-depth answers. And because I was unable to visit any of the cocktail bars, this survey played the most important part in the thesis. That is why I needed to think carefully about my survey questions and structure.

By reviewing theory and the research questions, I came up with 20 survey questions. I tried to make questions that were easy to understand and easy to answer. That is why majority of the survey questions are closed-ended questions, meaning that I have already provided multiple answers and all that the participants had to do was to choose the most suitable answer for them. Only few necessary open-ended questions were added, where participants could answer in their own words and provide additional information. Open-ended questions were also made if participants felt like there was a specific option missing from the ready-made response options. All but one of the open-ended questions were optional meaning that respondents didn't have to answer them if they didn't want to.

The survey was made online in Webpolsurveys.com. I chose to use Webropol because I had used it previously already and was familiar with how it worked. I also knew that with Webropol, I could create longer surveys as some survey platforms only allow you to create the maximum of 10 survey questions for free. At first, the survey was created in English, but I was later advised to create it in Finnish as well, because I was going to share the survey with Finnish speaking groups. The English-language survey can be found in the appendices.

Before posting the survey into any groups, I did several trial runs and shared it to my closest friends and family members. I wanted to get opinions from different ages and I also asked them to take time, because I needed to know if the survey was too long or too complicated. The survey was sent to approximately 10 testers and altered based on their feedback. After that I asked permission (from each groups administrator) to share the survey into three different Facebook groups. The survey was sent to a group called

Naistenhuone (Ladies' room) with over 100 000 members all over Finland. Because I wanted responses from men as well, the survey was sent to a group with 10 000 members called Miestenhuone (Men's' room). Lastly, I sent the survey to a group called Munkki-liike – Munkin asia!, which is a group for people living in Munkkiniemi, a neighborhood in west Helsinki. The reason I chose to share the survey to this groups was that the group consists of slightly older members whose opinions and ideas about cocktail bars bring not only more value to my research, but also different kind of viewpoints. Munkki-liike – Munkin asia! -group has almost 4 thousand active members.

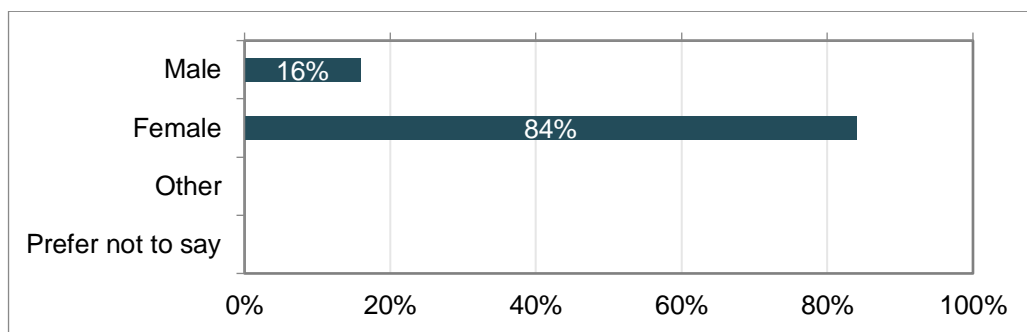
These three Facebook groups had members from all over Finland, so it was important to understand that there were people who didn't know my four chosen cocktail bars or people who didn't even like to visit cocktail bars at all. I tried to contact a group called 'Helsinki Cocktail', because I thought it would have been valuable to my research to receive answers from cocktail enthusiasts and professionals but unfortunately never got an answer. I also shared a link of the survey in my private Instagram page and got quite many participants from there as well.

## 4 Survey results

The analysis phase began with studying the survey results and statistics. All of the statistics and percentages were already created by Webropol, so all I had to do was to export the results to Excel and change all the answers to English. Overall, 247 answers were collected and compared in order to find out the most important elements customer find in a cocktail bar. All of the participants were Finnish.

The first four questions were geographical and were concentrating about respondents age, gender, employment status and place of residence. As seen in graph 2, two biggest age groups were 18-24- and 25-34-year olds. Because the survey was posted to “Ladies’ room” and it was the largest of the three groups I chose, 84% of respondents were women. The survey was also shared in groups with lot of male members, but only 39 males responded.

Graph 2. Gender of participants

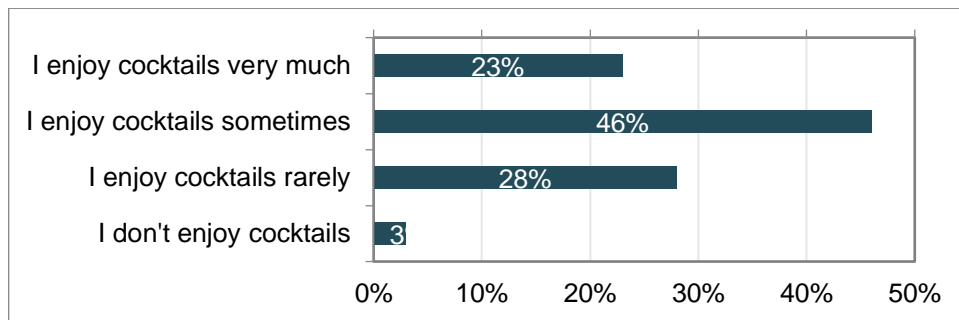


When it came to employment status, two of the largest groups were full-time employees and students. Participants had the option to write down their profession and there were quite many who worked in hospitality industry as waiters, chefs and even bartenders. Almost every participant (97.8%) lived in Finland, but I wanted to know how many percentages lived in Helsinki Metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa). I calculated the percentage in Excel based on everyone’s answers and found out that 40% lived in Helsinki, Espoo or Vantaa. This number was pretty good for my research, because it meant there was a higher chance that these people knew or had visited the chosen cocktail bars in Helsinki centre.

Questions 5 (Do you enjoy drinking cocktails?) and 6 (How do you feel about cocktail bars?) focused on respondents’ opinion about cocktails and cocktail bars. The purpose was to find out the number of respondents who liked drinking and visiting cocktail bars. If the percentages for this question had been low, the result would not have been as accurate. For both questions I had chosen four ready-made answers. Graph 3 shows that

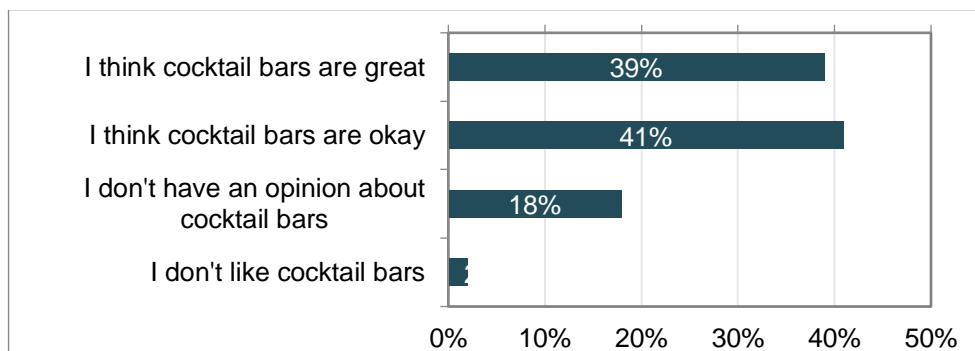
according to the responses, 46.6% enjoyed drinking cocktail sometimes. Respondents who liked drinking a lot and liked drinking rarely were almost on the same level with only a 5.3% difference.

Graph 3. Participants opinion on cocktails



As for visiting cocktail bars, 80% thought cocktail bars were either great or okay, whereas almost 20% didn't have an opinion on them. Only seven from the total of 247 respondents did not like cocktail bars (graph 4). The most common answer to how often participants visited cocktail bars was 1-3 times a year, but there were few who visited 7-10 times and even over 10 times a year. 16% of total respondents did not visit cocktail bars at all.

Graph 4. Participants opinion on cocktail bars



Question 7 was optional where respondents were able to explain why they either liked or did not like cocktails and cocktail bars. A total of 95 answers were collected and the topic shared a lot of opinions. The answers were divided into four groups based on the content and similar elements mentioned. First group (which also received the most comments) was respondents who liked cocktail bars or had previous experience of them. The second group was based on comments about the price of cocktails. Third group was respondents who disliked cocktail bars or had no strong opinion about them and, finally, the fourth group was formed based on other comments and opinions about cocktails. All of the responses were written in Finnish which I now have translated to English.

As previously stated, most respondents had positive feelings towards cocktail bars and some elements rose to the surface at this point already. Many similar comments mentioned things like “better quality and good service”. The most common thing mentioned was definitely the atmosphere, which came up in 23 comments. Below is a list of few positive comments about cocktails and cocktail bars;

- *“Cocktail bars have a certain kind of glamour compared to basic pubs. Customers also don’t aim to get wasted, so the atmosphere is much more comfortable. Optimal dating locations.”* (respondent 6)
- *“I really enjoy good cocktails but drink them only about 1-2 times a year.”* (respondent 11)
- *“Cocktails have much more flavor than beer or wine. Demanding drinks that are not made at home.”* (respondent 13)
- *“In my experience, the cocktail bars in Helsinki have a nice atmosphere, good service and music, although I visit them rarely.”* (respondent 17)
- *“Cocktail bars are stylish and cozy, and they play good music.”* (respondent 20)
- *“There are too few good cocktail bars, I’d like to visit them even more. I like the atmosphere and good drinks.”* (respondent 48)
- *“Good service, good handmade drinks and usually some nice twist in action, for example different decor or special names of drinks.”* (respondent 94)

Price seemed to be an influential factor to many and that is why this second group is focused on comments about price. Many participants felt that cocktails were too expensive. However, there were some, like respondent 27, who were happy to pay a little more in order to get good quality;

- *“Cocktail bars are expensive and therefore I visit them frequently. As visits are rare, no strong opinion has been formed.”* (respondent 10)
- *“I enjoy quality cocktails and the atmosphere of cocktail bars. I like to pay for quality, because I can make simple basic cocktails at home, and I don’t want to pay for that in a bar.”* (respondent 27)
- *“Expensive, chic, and most cocktails may not be to my taste.”* (respondent 29)
- *“I’ve worked in a Jazz Club in Turku, which advertised itself also as cocktail bar. Cocktail bars are nice if you are not terrified of the prices. Often the interior is also quite modern.”* (respondent 36)
- *“Cocktail bars are nice abroad. The price of one drink in Finland is really high, so I often make drinks at home.”* (respondent 62)



- *“Too expensive, does not go to the student budget. Sometimes it's nice to spoil yourself.”* (respondent 75)
- *“I hardly visit them, because they are expensive.”* (respondent 85)
- *“Only cocktails available and usually quite expensive.”* (respondent 90)

The third group was about negative or neutral comments about cocktail bars. There were respondents who disliked cocktail bars or just simply did not find them interesting. Few respondents also felt like cocktail bars are fancy establishments that are not suitable for “plain or ordinary people” while some thought that in order to visit a cocktail bar, one must have a good reason, like a big celebration.

- *“I don't like cocktail bars because they have too sophisticated people present.”* (respondent 1)
- *“I don't drink alcohol and it shouldn't even exist.”* (respondent 5)
- *“I prefer beer.”* (respondent 21)
- *“I've never been to one or haven't even really seen one anywhere.”* (respondent 45)
- *“Cocktails are different, sophisticated, only for “special occasion”.”* (respondent 34)
- *“For me, cocktails are mostly very special drinks to be enjoyed. Price affects a lot.”* (respondent 37)
- *“I'm more of a pub type than a cocktail bar type.”* (respondent 39)
- *“I enjoy relaxed pubs more.”* (respondent 40)
- *“Not the kind of thing that is necessarily interesting but sometimes nice to visit.”* (respondent 71)
- *“Usually too fancy places for a normal weekend, so I only visit cocktail bars in special occasions.”* (respondent 79)
- *“Usually too fancy, I like more relaxed places.”* (respondent 86)
- *“I think cocktail bars are pointless”* (respondent 89)

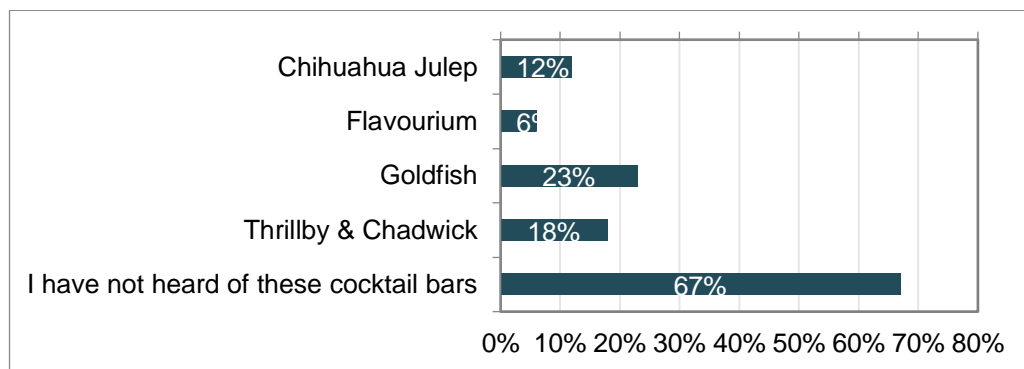
Lastly, I formed a group from other comments and opinions. The comments were fairly neutral, but for example respondents 7 and 57 had a belief that cocktail bars are not being advertised enough. Respondents 2 and 22 shared an opinion about negative experience in a bar that is trying too hard;

- *“A cocktail bar with a skilled bartender is a great place to be. In a bad cocktail bar, where the staff and bartenders are trying to be something they are not, I mostly feel annoyed.”* (respondent 2)

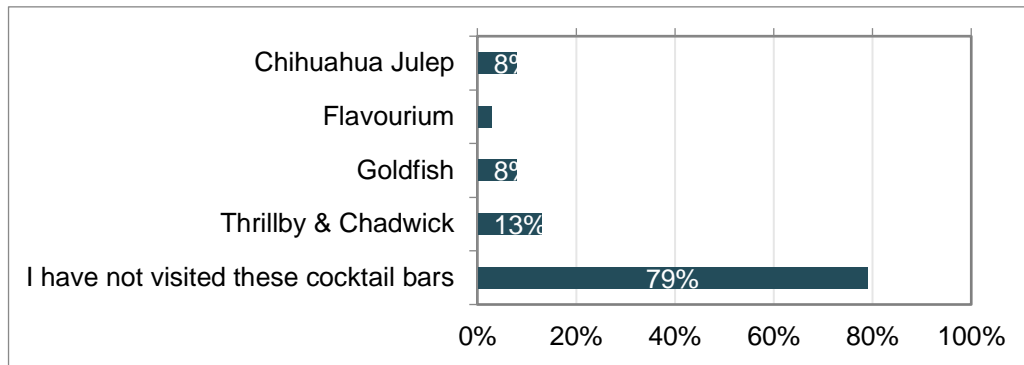
- *“Cocktail bars are not advertised enough, so I drink cocktails elsewhere.”* (respondent 7)
- *“If cocktail bars are “trying too hard”, the feeling is ruined. Menu and service must be easy and understandable also to your “average joe”, and fast.”* (respondent 22)
- *“Sometimes you need to celebrate and enjoy life with style, cocktails are one wonderful way to do so!”* (respondent 23)
- *“I myself am a bartender and I work in a cocktail bar. I like to taste and get to know something new.”* (respondent 35)
- *“I like visually beautiful drinks.”* (respondent 46)
- *“I would like to visit them more often”. They should add more selection and more ads.”* (respondent 57)

Questions 9 and 10 were focused on my four chosen cocktail bars (Chihuahua Julep, Flavourium, Goldfish, Trillby & Chadwick). I was curious to find out how well-known these bars were and what percentage of respondents had possibly even visited some of them. As 60% of participants lived outside Helsinki area, it was very likely most of them were not familiar with the cocktail bars. Graph 5 shows that 67% of respondents said they had never heard of the four bars mentioned. Goldfish was the most known cocktail bar with 23% and Trillby & Chadwick second with 18%. When it came to visiting the bars, the percentages changed even more. Almost 80% of respondents had never visited any of the cocktail bars. The most visited bar was the speakeasy Trillby & Chadwick as seen in graph 6.

Graph 5. Percentages of cocktail bars which participants had heard of

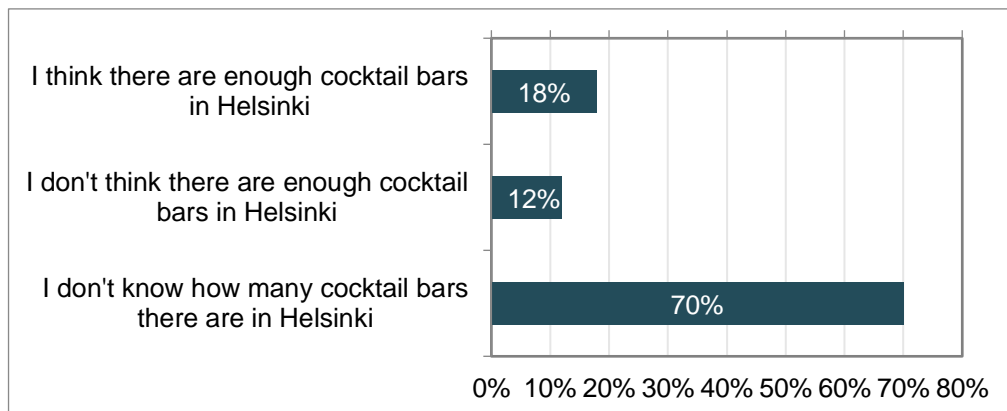


Graph 6. Percentages of cocktail bars which participants had visited



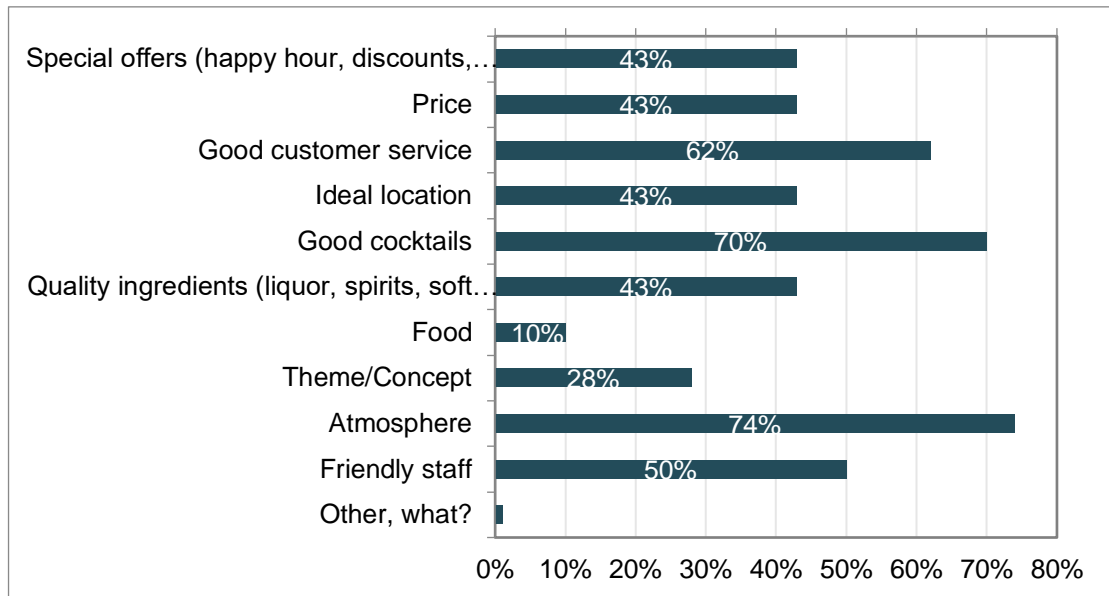
When asked about the number of cocktail bars in Helsinki, 70% did not know how many bars there were. This was probably also due to the fact that the majority of participants did not live in Helsinki area. However, 18% said that the number of cocktail bars in Helsinki was appropriate, while 12% thought there could have been even more cocktail bars in Helsinki (graph 7).

Graph 7. Participants opinion on the number of cocktail bars in Helsinki



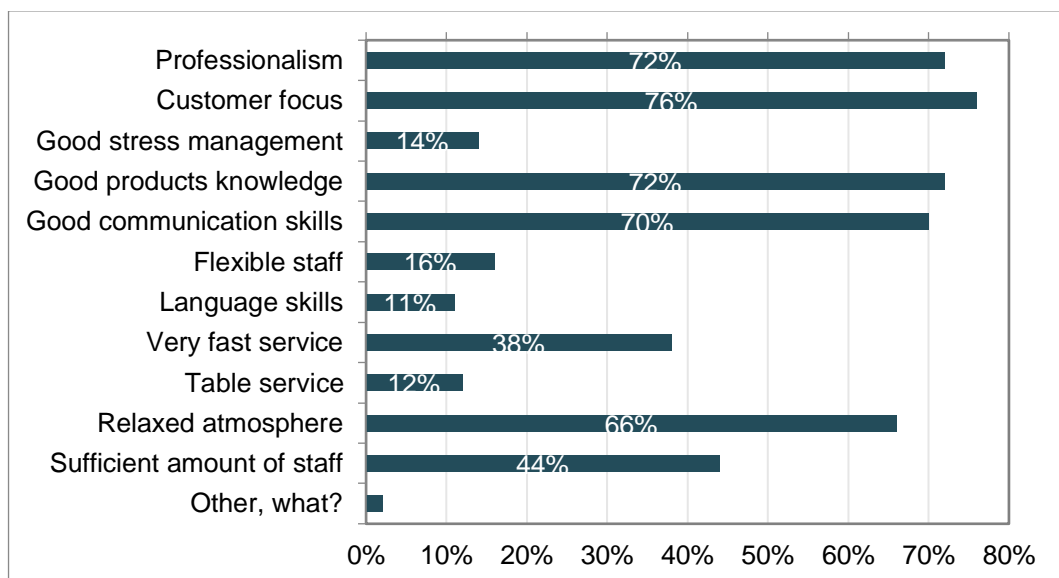
Questions 11, 12 and 13 were focused on the cocktail bar elements and were also the most important when thinking about this research. First, I wanted to know the main reason why customers revisit a certain bar. Or in other words: what are the factors that make customers come back to the same bar over and over again. Graph 8 shows the clear top three as respondents selected “atmosphere, good cocktails and good customer service” out of my pre-set options. One person responded that their reason of revisiting a bar are various boardgames.

Graph 8. Elements to why customer revisit the same bar again



Similar answers were recorded from the following question which focused on different elements of customer service. Participants were given 12 elements from which they had to select only five. Graph 9 demonstrates the most selected customer service elements which were “customer focus, good product knowledge, professionalism, good communication skills and relaxed atmosphere”. Five answers, left to the open-ended field, were saying that employees need to smile and be friendly, need be clean and have good hygiene, own a good sense of humour and be able to read customer needs.

Graph 9. The percentage of customer service elements by participants

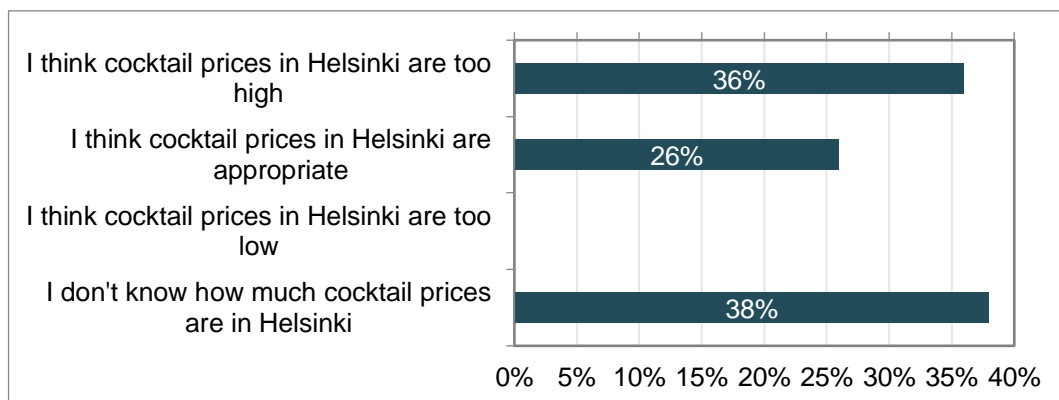


Lastly, the participants were given 17 elements and their task was to rate them from 1 to 5 with 1 being the least important and 5 the most important when thinking about cocktail

bars. The elements that received the lowest scores in average were “food, entertainment and size of the bar” whereas “good customer service, cleanliness and friendly staff” were noticeably the highest rated ones.

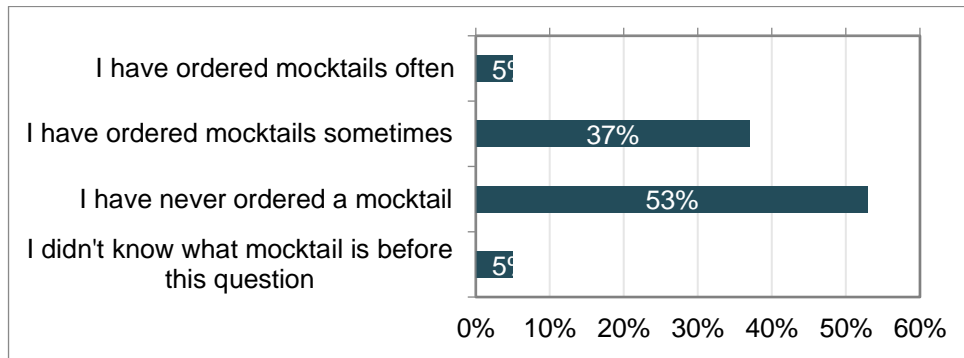
Price of the cocktails is known to be quite high in Finland, so I wanted to find out what the participants thought about cocktail prices in Helsinki. Graph 10 indicates how 38% of the respondents didn’t know how much cocktails cost in Helsinki. 36% thought the price was too high, while 26% thought the price was suitable. Not a single one thought the price was too low. Participants were able to assign the most suitable price for a cocktail in Helsinki based on their own opinion. Quite many respondents revealed that they did not have any idea how much a single cocktail should cost. The ones who knew something about the prices mentioned that the price depended a lot about the drink itself and the ingredients used in it. I calculated the average price among all respondents by using Excel and the average turned out to be 10.5 euros. When asking about the amount of drinks participants enjoyed when visiting a cocktail bar, the most common answer with 54% was 1-2 cocktails. Several of participants mentioned that they could have had enjoyed more cocktails if they weren’t so expensive in Finland.

Graph 10. Participants opinion about cocktail prices in Helsinki

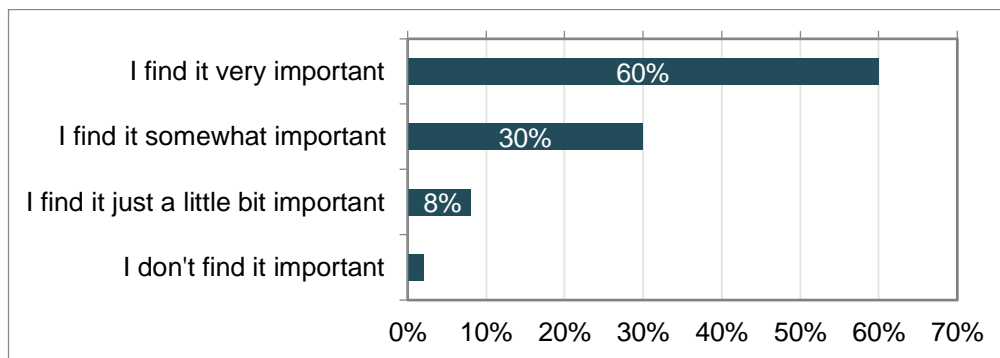


I included mocktails in the survey, because today it is highly important to include non-alcoholic drinks in the menu so there is an option for everyone. I also wanted to get participants opinion about the topic. According to the survey, 60% of respondents found it very important, that bars offered non-alcoholic options for customers (graph 12) even though 53% of them had never ordered a mocktail (graph 11). 37% of respondents stated to have ordered mocktails sometimes when visiting a cocktail bar as graph 11 shows below.

Graph 11. Percentages on how often participants have ordered a mocktail



Graph 12. Participants opinion on bars offering non-alcoholic drinks to customers



The last question in the survey was an open-ended question where participants were given the opportunity to give free comments and opinions about cocktail bars in Helsinki. Total of 14 responses were given and most of them were irrelevant to my research as they were mostly feedbacks about the survey, comments about how to improve some of the questions or participants talking about the coronavirus. Here are some translated comments from the respondents related to cocktail bars;

- *"Cocktail bar culture is pretty non-existent in Finland so far. You can also order a cocktail from the regular bar and because of that, visits to cocktail bars are rare."* (respondent 3)
- *"Cocktail bars should have their own app."* (respondent 5)
- *"I wish there was more information about cocktail bars in general."* (respondent 6)
- *"One important criterion is how full the place is. I won't go to the bar if it's packed."* (respondent 7)
- *"New owners could advertise their business more and, in that way, the middle-aged would also notice."* (respondent 13)
- *"Food is pretty important in a cocktail bar, but usually all they have are just small bar snacks."* (respondent 14)

## **5 Discussion**

In this chapter I am going to analyse and discuss about my survey results and evaluate my thesis process and my own learnings. Lastly, I will conclude the thesis by answering my research questions.

### **5.1 Analysis of survey results**

Even though I was not able to follow the original plan of visiting the cocktail bars personally, I feel like my “plan b” worked pretty well. I am satisfied with the number of respondents in my survey as it allowed for the results to be more accurate and trustworthy. However, I would have wanted more male respondents to balance the answers and give their own perspectives on cocktail culture in Helsinki. The majority of the participants were students, which can be a good thing, but sometimes also bad. Students are known to be active partygoers who love to try new things and have fun with their friends. However, students are usually very busy with balancing school and work, not to mention the fact that cocktails cost quite a lot in Helsinki so not every student could afford going to a cocktail bar that often.

It was very relieving to notice how many people liked drinking cocktails and enjoyed going to cocktail bars. As previously presented above, most of the comments that were left in the open-ended questions were positive and respondents were actually excited to share their own opinions and stories about their cocktail experience. Even though many respondents had very positive feeling towards cocktail bars many admitted visiting them very rarely, mainly because of the high prices. In addition to saying the prices were too high, some respondents still had a very strong feeling how cocktail bars were only suitable for very “sophisticated” and “upper class” people. In my theoretical part, I explained about the rise of cocktail bars where fancy cocktail parties were organized, and bartending was highly valued job. Some movies might still present cocktail bars this way and I think that is why some of my respondents had the image of cocktail bars being very elegant and fancy, when in reality that is not the case anymore.

I think cocktail bars in Helsinki should try to advertise themselves even better. The fact that cocktail bars are for everyone who want to relax and enjoy a nice and cool beverage should be brought out more to “the ordinary people” and not just to those who are cocktail enthusiasts already. This way bars would get new customers to experience something different and possibly share it forward afterwards, thus creating word of mouth marketing which is very important to bars. When thinking about how often participants visit cocktail

bars, 45% responded to visiting only 1-3 times a year. In my opinion that amount is quite low. Perhaps, if the survey would have been sent only to people living in Helsinki area, the visiting amounts could have been slightly higher. Luckily, there were people who visit cocktail bars 7-10 and even over 10 times per year.

In order for cocktail bars to gain more visitors, I think they should have more offers for customers. In the marketing chapter of my research, I explained how the Finnish laws about alcohol are pretty strict, but that does not mean bars cannot have any kinds of offers for customers. Bars in Helsinki can create workshops and tastings where customers can make their own drinks or taste certain kind of liquors. I find it also highly important to take students into consideration somehow, by offering even a small discount of some sort. So far, there aren't that many bars who do so, so that would be an excellent way of standing out from others. I also have to agree with some of the respondents, who mentioned that cocktail bars in Helsinki are not marketing themselves enough and there could still be much room for improvement in creativity. A larger number of respondents would have heard and visited my chosen bars, if they stood out from the crowd for example with a clever advertisement which is relatable to every adult. As the advertising of strong liquors is not allowed in Finland, bars need to come up with other clever ways to connect with the potential customers.

Next, I would like to discuss about elements, which play the key role in this thesis. The elements for the survey were selected based on my findings in the theoretical part where I was gathering up information about the main cocktail bar elements. The survey had only three questions about elements and thinking about it now, I could have added few more. I did however manage to find out the most important elements in a bar as well as the essential elements that make customers want to revisit a certain bar again. Few elements, like atmosphere, customer service and good cocktails, kept getting high ratings in every single question and these are also the elements I mentioned in the research phase when thinking about the bar industry.

Good customer service is important to everyone, but for Finns it seems to be the most influential factor. It is one of the key elements of a successful bar, because it is something customers will remember for a long time. Perhaps that is the reason customer service was rated one of the highest elements. The next most popular element that kept popping up was atmosphere. Atmosphere was also mentioned several times in the open-ended answers as some respondents explained how they "preferred cocktails bars over regular bars specifically because of the atmosphere". One respondent had a shareworthy description about cocktail bars. This person explained how "cocktail bars have a homely



atmosphere, but the professionalism can be reflected in better service". In other words, you can feel like home in a cocktail bar, but still receive excellent service.

Elements that received pretty equal ratings were quality ingredients, wide product selection, special offers, price and location. The option "quality ingredients" includes all the things needed for creating cocktails, such as spirits, sodas, and spices and the option "special offers" are things like happy hour, discounts and student benefits. In the theory part I explained the importance of quality ingredients. Even hundreds of years ago, some cocktail ingredients, like syrups, have been high quality and usually homemade. I would have thought quality ingredients to receive higher rates, because those are the ones that eventually create the "good cocktail" which many considered being one of the most important bar elements. All four chosen cocktail bars reported using quality ingredients in their social media sites, but there was only one cocktail bar (Goldfish) who shared what each drink actually included.

Based on my research about cocktail bars around the world, many bars pay close attention to their theme and concept nowadays. That is why I was slightly surprised when theme and concept received pretty low scores and I personally would have rated them little higher. In my opinion theme or a concept are the things that create and form a bar. Especially today, when we live in a time where experiences must be offered to customers more than the products. There is nothing to be seen in a bar what is just a bar. Out of my four cocktail bars Son of a Punch has the best understanding of the importance of theme as Trillby & Chadwick is not the only cocktail bar they have with a creative theme. Theme goes kind of hand in hand with atmosphere, but when all the elements of a specific theme (for example menu, décor, music and service) match, the atmosphere rises to a whole different level and the experience becomes exceptional, sometimes even immersive.

According to the survey, food was noticeably the least important element and that is quite understandable. Bars, in general, don't usually offer big dishes like restaurants do and the focus is typically on small bar snacks only. However, I think cocktail bars should pay close attention to what they are offering and try to stand out with their food also. Based on my research of the four cocktail bars, Goldfish was the only one to mention bar snacks in their website.

Previously in the theoretical part I talked about mocktails and the importance of them today. I explained how mocktails should be included in the menu especially because of Millennials who are looking for healthier options, but also sharing images and experiences online about pretty much anything. The majority of respondents were Millennials as the

two biggest age groups were 18-24- and 25-34-year olds. That is why the rating for non-alcoholic options was also so high, because many of us Millennials feel like the serving of non-alcoholic drinks is a necessity and not an option. It was also interesting to see that almost half of respondents had ordered mocktails at some point, which indicates that they should be kept on the menu in the future as well.

Lastly, I would shortly like to discuss my four chosen cocktail bars and my own experiences with each one. Since I was unable to visit them personally, the only possible element to rate was their customer service. I contacted each bar either on Facebook or via emails. I also scrolled through their Instagram accounts and compared them, but it is impossible to tell whether a bar is good or not and how the drinks taste based on images.

When rating each bar only based on their online customer service, I would rate Chihuahua Julep the highest. They were very active and replied very fast. They were also the only ones to invited me to visit their bar for taking pictures of the interior even though it was closed. With (The One Bar) Flavourium and Trillby & Chadwick, their online customer service was pretty basic, and they replied within few days. I would have liked to see more images of Trillby & Chadwick's cocktails on their Instagram, but I do also understand that they want to maintain a secretive atmosphere because of the concept. Flavouriums cocktails however look very outstanding and I think they are being very creative with them. I just wish they would be more active on Instagram like they used to be when the bar was still A21. Goldfish was the bar who took the longest to reply and I even had to send them multiple emails before getting their attention. However, when they did reply, they sent me multiple pictures of the interior and drinks which made up for the fact that I had to wait for reply for few weeks.

## **5.2 Thesis process and my own learnings**

The thesis process was pretty successful, and I ended up writing much more than expected. The hardest part was getting started but once the outline was done and I had an idea about what I wanted to include in the research, the writing started to feel easier. I did spend more time writing the thesis than I originally had planned, and the amount of work was honestly very surprising to me at first. My original schedule got extended little bit because of the coronavirus situation and because I had to come up with another plan to finish the research.

Finding proper sources about the topic was the next difficult thing. Luckily there were many articles about cocktail bars which I was able to use, even though towards the end I felt like I was using too many references and the list seemed like it was never going to

end. I would have wanted more articles about Finnish cocktail bars, but there were surprisingly few of them or they were very old. Overall, I am pretty happy about my theoretical part, but if I could change something, I would try to find more history about cocktail bars in Finland and the Finnish alcohol history in general. I would have also shown more numbers about successful cocktail bars to get better idea of how much profit cocktail bars should make on average to survive in the industry.

Survey part was good considering that it was not my original plan to create a survey like that. My original plan about a short one-page questionnaire turned into an extensive five-page Webropol survey and took a lot of time to create. My goal was to get at least 100 respondents, so I am very pleased with the 247 participants I got. As I explained in the analysis phase, it would have been better to collect the same amount of female as well as male respondents. As for the survey, I would have created few more questions about the elements, since now there were only three, to make sure the answers were reliable and accurate. I could have also created an optional open-ended question about participants best or worst cocktail bar experiences to see any possible similarities many bars have. Additionally, I should have taken account respondents who did not drink alcohol at all, because that option was not selectable in every question.

Overall, the research was really successful, and I am happy with the end result. I learned very much along this process. I understood that the beginning of the thesis felt hard because I was so used to doing long reports in groups and asking for help from someone else. I am normally very punctual and scheduling things is not a challenge for me. Yet, the time management of this research seemed very difficult sometimes and I had days when it felt like I was not going to finish on time. I also learned that, when it came to my thesis content, I was pretty determined but sometimes too demanding as occasionally I was not happy with my writing and ended up deleting it completely.

### **5.3 In conclusion**

The main objective of this research was to find out the elements that make an effective and popular cocktail bar. Based on the survey results, the elements with most impact on customer count in cocktail bars are atmosphere, cleanliness, friendly staff, good customer service and good cocktails. Atmosphere was rated the most important element because cocktail bars invest in it. Each cocktail bar has its “own thing” that creates a different atmosphere and that is why the experience and ambience varies from bar to bar. Some also described atmosphere as the special feeling or a vibe they get once they enter a bar.

Respondents rated cleanliness on a scale of 1-5 the highest out of 16 other elements. In addition to the bar interior and bathroom being clean, the cleanliness includes bar stations and tools, glassware and the neat appearance of the staff.

Third and fourth important elements are friendly staff and good customer service which go hand in hand. The cocktail bar staff need to be experienced and well trained. With their personalized service, they need to strive to making customers feel special and spoiled. Good customer service was rated very high in every question and mentioned often in the comments. In addition to the service being good, it has to be friendly and relaxed at the same time making customer feel like they are taken care of. Lastly, there is the fifth element, which is the serving of good cocktails. Participants noted that because cocktails cost a bit more than regular drinks, they also expect more from the drink and want it to taste good. Customers go to bars to enjoy themselves, so bad tasting drink might end up ruining the whole experience even if there was nothing wrong with the bar otherwise.

My first sub-question was focusing on the things that make customers want to revisit the same bar again. Similar elements rose to the surface as in the main question. Participants rated atmosphere, good cocktails and good customer service the highest. This means that a bar, where these three things in particular work well, is more likely to get regular customers. My second sub-question was about the features of good customer experiences. The answers were mainly focused on customer service elements as respondents stated that the positive experiences need to include excellent customer service and focus that is provided to by professionals. However, the atmosphere should still be very relaxed and cozy while the staff is being friendly and helpful to everyone. The last sub-question was about the things needed when establishing your own cocktail bar. Starting your own bar needs lot of planning and research. Writing an extensive business plan that covers everything and acquiring all the needed licenses early enough are the first steps needed to be done. Bar's name, logo, theme, design, menu and location need to be well-matched. Lastly, there is hiring the staff and marking the bar as much as you can before opening. I made an illustration of all the needed steps and it can be found in Figures 1 and 2.

For further development of this research, I would suggest on visiting each cocktail bar in person and interviewing customers there. That way more reliable and personal data is collected and unnecessary comments like "I don't know how much cocktails cost" will not appear. Customers visiting cocktail bars can usually name improvement ideas and the reasons they like to revisit them. If possible, I would also recommend interviewing the staff

or other cocktail specialist in order to get an insight from the people working “on the other side of the bar”.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Survey

#### Cocktail Survey

Hello. I'm a student in Haaga-Helia and this is my survey about customers' opinion about cocktail bars and the elements (location, price, décor, menu, etc,...) cocktail bars have. This survey also focuses on four cocktail bars in Helsinki: Chihuahua Julep, Flavorium, Goldfish and Trillby & Chadwick.

**When answering this survey, please keep in mind that cocktail bars are establishments that specialize in cocktails, so regular pubs and bars do not count.**

This questionnaire has 20 questions and will only take about 5-10 minutes.

Thank you for answering my survey!

#### 1. How old are you? \*

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65-74
- ☐ 75+

#### 2. What gender are you? \*

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**3. What is your current employment status? (You may select multiple answers) \***

- ☐ Employed (full-time)
- ☐ Employed (part-time)
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Unable to work
- ☐ Other
- ☐ What is your profession? (optional)

**4. Where do you currently live? \***

- ☐ In Finland, where?
- ☐ Outside of Finland, where?

Next

**Cocktail Survey**

**5. Do you enjoy drinking cocktails? \***

- ☐ I enjoy cocktails very much
- ☐ I enjoy cocktails sometimes
- ☐ I enjoy cocktails rarely
- ☐ I don't enjoy cocktails

**6. What is your opinion about cocktail bars? \***

- ☐ I think cocktail bars are great
- ☐ I think cocktail bars are okay
- ☐ I don't have an opinion about cocktail bars
- ☐ I do not like cocktail bars

**7. Please explain your previous answer shortly. (optional)**

**8. How often do you visit a cocktail bar? \***

- ☐ 1-3 times a year
- ☐ 4-6 times a year
- ☐ 7-10 times a year
- ☐ Over 10 times a year
- ☐ I don't visit cocktails bars

**9. Please mark if you have heard of any of these cocktail bars in Helsinki. (You may select multiple answers) \***

- ☐ Chihuahua Julep
- ☐ Flavorium
- ☐ Goldfish
- ☐ Thrillby & Chadwick
- ☐ I have not heard of these cocktail bars

**10. Please mark if you have visited any of these cocktail bars in Helsinki. (You may select multiple answers) \***

- ☐ Chihuahua Julep
- ☐ Flavorium
- ☐ Goldfish
- ☐ Thrillby & Chadwick
- ☐ I have not visited these cocktail bars

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### Cocktail Survey

**11. What is the main reason you want to visit the same cocktail bar more than once? (You may select multiple answers) \***

- ☐ Atmosphere
- ☐ Good cocktails
- ☐ Good customer service
- ☐ Friendly staff
- ☐ Ideal location
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Price
- ☐ Special offers (happy hour, discounts, student benefits, etc.,)
- ☐ Theme/Concept
- ☐ Quality ingredients (liquor, spirits, soft drinks, fruits, herbs, etc.,)
- ☐ Other, what?



**12. On a scale of 1-5, how important do you find these elements in a cocktail bar? 1 being not important at all and 5 being very important. \***

	1	2	3	4	5
Atmosphere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fancy glassware (glasses, plates, spoons, straws, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interior/décor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unique menu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wide product selection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Price	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Size of the bar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special offers (happy hour, discounts, student benefits, etc.,)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Theme/Concept	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality ingredients (liquor, spirits, soft drinks, fruits, herbs, etc.,)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13.**

**Pick five (5) most important customer service elements to you.**

\*

- ☐ Customer focus
- ☐ Flexible staff
- ☐ Good communication skills
- ☐ Good products knowledge
- ☐ Good stress management
- ☐ Language skills
- ☐ Professionalism
- ☐ Relaxed atmosphere
- ☐ Sufficient amount of staff
- ☐ Table service
- ☐ Very fast service
- ☐ Other, what?

Previous

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## Cocktail Survey

14. How do you feel about cocktail prices in Helsinki? \*

- ☐ I think cocktail prices in Helsinki are too high
- ☐ i think cocktail prices in Helsinki are appropriate
- ☐ I think cocktail prices in Helsinki are too low
- ☐ I don't know how much cocktail prices are in Helsinki

15. What do you think is a suitable price for a cocktail in Helsinki? \*

16. How many cocktails on average do you enjoy in one night? \*

- ☐ 1-2 cocktails
- ☐ 3-4 cocktails
- ☐ 5-6 cocktails
- ☐ 7-8 cocktails
- ☐ 9 or more cocktails

Previous

Next

## Cocktail Survey

**17. Have you ever ordered a mocktail (nonalcoholic cocktail) in a cocktail bar?**

- ☐ I have ordered mocktails often
- ☐ I have ordered mocktails
- ☐ I have never ordered a mocktail
- ☐ I didn't know what mocktail is before this question

**18. How important do you find that cocktail bars take nonalcoholic customers into consideration? \***

- ☐ I find it very important
- ☐ I find it somewhat important
- ☐ I find it just a little bit important
- ☐ I don't find it important

**19. Do you think there are enough cocktail bars in Helsinki? \***

- ☐ I think there are enough cocktail bars in Helsinki
- ☐ I don't think there are enough cocktail bars in Helsinki
- ☐ I don't know how many cocktail bars there are in Helsinki

**20. Is there anything else you would like to comment about cocktail bars in Helsinki? (optional)**

Previous

Submit